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THE

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1920.

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# THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

SEPTEMBER 1920.

## THE FOURTH DIMENSION.

BY HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL.

### CHAPTER IX.

#### MARKING TIME.

#### I.

CHERRY waited a week before he set pen to paper, a notable abstention for such a man, because within twenty-four hours he knew that his imagination was at work again. The weather happened to be bitterly cold; a north-east wind roared over Dartmoor. Cherry was tempted to sit by the fire in his little sitting-room, smoke many pipes, and jot down his thoughts as they flew in and out of his mind. Fortunately, he had sense enough to realise that the snake, insomnia, was merely scotched, not killed. To kill it, he must walk fast and far each day, braving the blast. Then he would return tired but hungry, and sleep soundly after a full meal. The will to put from him perplexing and irritating reflections concerning Jess and himself seemed to increase as he exercised it. The mere fact that he could, once more, master himself filled him with boyish glee. In this spirit he had attacked examination papers long ago, coming, in racing parlance, 'fit' to the post. To get fit now engrossed him. In London he had smoked too much, drunk more wine than was wise, pampered the flesh. At Chagford he went into training, well aware that a supreme effort lay ahead of him.

At the end of the first week, he tried an experiment. After breakfast he re-read what he had written of the third act, and burnt it. He glanced affectionately at a new note-book, stuffing it into his breast pocket and patting it.

'May the right stuff go into you,' he prayed.

His landlady brought him two neat packages—sandwiches and cake. She eyed her lodger complacently.

'I never saw such a change in anyone,' she declared.

Cherry laughed.

'I feel like an ox just before he's turned into Bovril. Yes; to-day, we shall extract vital juices.'

'You aren't going to write on the moor?'

'Balzac used to write in a wood in all weathers. I shall try the low side of a tor. I feel elemental, primitive. I have made my sacrifices to the god of Fire. Now for earth and air and water.'

'You'll find all three to-day.'

He did.

Breasting the long hill up to the moor, earth was firm beneath his feet; the cold air quickened his pulses; the rain seemed to wash from him the soot of London. He was cleansed in all his tissues. For an hour at least, he pushed on, following the twisting road, seeing little, not pausing to look back. The signs of civilisation, the myriad works of man, vanished one by one. When he left the last farm behind him, he abandoned the track, and trod joyously the heather, making for the small tor to the left. When he reached the summit, Dartmoor was obscured by rain and mist. So much the better. He wanted to feel, not see the immensity of it, to be possessed by the spirits of space, to inhale rapturously the subtle odours of Nature. He desired to present himself as an empty vessel before the Lord, a receiver of any message that might be transmitted. Never had he attempted this before. A solemn faith sustained him. Out of the tangled skeins of thought some fine pattern would, surely, be evolved. The open mind on the open moor besought the Omnipotent Mind to inform it. Would such an invocation be answered?

For the moment, at any rate, he achieved peace; he escaped from the importunities of our too complex civilisation, from the thousand and one conflicting claims of others. The theme of his play, as has been said, was the happy co-ordination of the old order with the new. In his two acts, he had presented both orders with a fidelity that had won commendation from Wrest. The third act demanded inspiration, some solution of a problem that vexed a troubled world disintegrated by war. His solution, if he found it, would adjust the lives of his protagonists. It might not be of universal application. But if it helped a little, if it lightened a few burdens, if it served as a flickering beacon, if it

were, in fine, a true solution so far as it went, he would have done 'his bit.'

He was sensible of one astounding and confounding change in his point of view. He had left his wife under the dominating impulse of making good, of achieving a success at least commensurate with hers. And he had recognised this impulse as vanity. Dartmoor had blown the vanity out of him. The wilderness had taught him values. He must satisfy himself with no tormenting thought of satisfying others.

Three days before, he had discovered a rough shelter, used by shepherds in summertime. He curled himself up in this, and pulled out his note-book.

He wrote steadily for four hours.

## II.

As he came down to Chagford, under clearing skies, he heard the silvery bells of Chagford church, ringing their changes, a pean of thanksgiving. He sat down in his armchair, drank his tea, and read what he had written. It was good. He resisted the temptation to write more, envisaging, instead, the scene as it would be played on the stage. He knew now that this experiment, so far as his work was concerned, had succeeded. He would finish his play, and send it to Godfrey Ambrose. Then he would go back to Jess.

Next morning, he awoke immensely refreshed, eager to take the hill, although the weather was changing for the worse. He decided to explore the wilder country about Cranmere Pool, where the twin Teigns and the Dart bubbled out of the moor. Here a few ponies were grazing, tails tucked in, with their backs to the wind. He saw some rabbits, a crow, and half a dozen curlew. Under the spell of solitude, he wrote for several hours, sensible of an amazing mental exhilaration. But he returned home wet and tired to be scolded by his landlady. He laughed at her, because the back of his third act was broken. He had mastered it. Nothing else mattered.

Within a fortnight, three weeks exactly from the day when he had left his wife, the third act was finished. He had never worked so quickly or so easily. Words seemed to float to him on the wings of the wind, a message from the Infinite. Pruning, polishing, and typing his manuscript engrossed a few more days. Then he despatched it to Ambrose, asking for a quick decision.

Reaction followed.

He meant to go home, but, somehow, he lingered in Chagford. He did not tell Jess that his work was done, because temptation assailed him to finish the first play. What a triumph to return with something 'big' for his wife, to give it to her, and then to see what she made of it. And if it was written, the work must be done away from her. Otherwise, what he shrank from would take place—inevitable portraiture. Welfare's play, he felt sure, would be somewhat on the lines indicated by that facile worker. Welfare couldn't leave the broad highroad. The rough draft was in his bag. He read it through, recalling the odd hours at Manchester and Birmingham when he had wrestled with many difficulties. And, immediately after marriage, he had abandoned the task. Why? Because, primarily, the Jess of his imagination was so different from the real Jess, and he had tried in vain to combine two personalities. Reading over the script, he realised, too, his disabilities. He couldn't work intermittently. Always it had been so. His best work, invariably, exacted intense concentration. The original idea allured him afresh. And so much had to be done. Jess, moreover, was prepared for a two months' absence. She didn't know as yet that he had sent his finished play to Godfrey Ambrose, or that it was finished. Behind this apparent secretiveness lay, of course, the ardent wish to surprise her, to greet her with the glad assurance: 'Ambrose has accepted it.' In his letters, he had avoided details about his work. Jess knew that he wasn't normally a very rapid worker. This wonderful Dartmoor had revealed new potentialities. Hitherto, even when he was giving almost undivided attention to housekeeping, he had kept up his journalism, the many 'pot-boilers' which he dashed off without effort. Not one had been written at Chagford. He understood now why his serious work had been accomplished slowly. Journalism, the 'copy,' 'turned in' to the minute, had been a drag upon the wheels of imagination. And what a will-o'-the-wisp imagination was! It eluded, maliciously, those who tried to capture and hold it. Across the bogs of Dartmoor it danced joyously and continuously; it flickered and went out in the Regent's Park Road.

This conviction disconcerted him terribly. Burns' lines haunted him.

'To make a happy fireside clime  
To weans and wife,  
That's the true pathos and sublime  
Of human life.'



But his wife must live in London, close to the theatres, within sound of the roaring thoroughfares. And his weans—if they came to him—would be little Cockneys, tiny citizens of Babylon, precociously wise, exotics, another breed from the hardy, red-cheeked children who raced up and down the Devon hills. He computed slowly the culminating effect of London upon himself. Since his Oxford days, he had lived and worked in London, but always his small flat had served as a sanctuary. After marriage, he had been not only in but of London. And its myriad exactions had wearied him. How soon the excitement of ordering a new house, of 'doing things' well, a shade better than the 'other fellow,' had evaporated. He had helped to 'boom' his wife, his sweet Jess, and the inevitable 'slump' had followed.

During his first week's vagabondage, when he had rushed hither and thither, rejoicing in his freedom, he had found a small house high above the lovely valley of the Teign, looking down upon the river where it widened below Chagford bridge. A delightful garden encompassed it, with half a dozen great trees throwing translucent shadows upon a velvety lawn. A notice board informed all comers that the place was to be let or sold. Cherry had tapped at the back door, and the caretaker, who opened it, invited him in. Together they went over the house. It was just right for a couple of moderate means, and held at a modest rental. What a home for a man who wished to escape from the importunate crowd!

Later on, when he was at work, he put resolutely from him all thoughts of what might have been if Jess were other than she was. Absence from her rekindled loyalty to her. In a spirit of altruism he had wooed and won her. Afterwards, when they had settled down, he was sensible that the exactions of the flesh had reinstated self. Now, leading a simple and ascetic life, self slunk into the shadows, whence it gibbered at him harmlessly. He must make Jess happy. Together, without friction, they would reconsider their position. For a few months, they had attempted the impossible; the double yoke of pleasure-seeking and working had exhausted him and would, in time, exhaust her.

Smart society must be scrapped.

So far, so good.

He remained, meanwhile, at Chagford, and began to rewrite the Jess play.

## III.

But, if it was well with the husband, during this brief dissolution of partnership, it was not so well with the wife. Mere work, and the love of working, failed to satisfy Jess. For this we must blame Cherry and the unwritten, seemingly immutable laws that make a true understanding of women so difficult to men. A clever man takes certain things for granted; a clever woman becomes restless and unhappy because she doesn't. Every woman, excepting those who are essentially masculine, craves for love expressed. Love unexpressed excites and exasperates them. Cherry's love for his wife lay between the lines of his letters, not in them. Miss Oldacre would have seen this, but Jess did not show her husband's letters to Miss Oldacre. She read and pondered them alone. Had he written with entire frankness, had he, for instance, told her of the house near Chagford, and described vividly his emotions when he visualised himself and her living in it, she would have understood him. Reticence about his work was another masculine blunder. Away from her, he became shadowy, unreal. She was incapable of taking for granted that this was an experiment, an attempt to accomplish a definite end, to be talked over exhaustively later on. As a matter of fact, Cherry missed her terribly, ached at times with longing for her, but he didn't tell her so, because he foolishly supposed that it would upset her. It was conceivable, indeed, that such a creature might cancel material obligations and rush to him. Behind this again lay the conviction that much as he wanted his wife the experiment would be imperilled if she did rush to him.

To add to her distress she was conscious of something startlingly unexpected. Her work at the theatre was losing its quality. What Miss Oldacre had predicted at Manchester came to pass. An unhappy woman off the stage was unable to diffuse happiness on it. A great actress, Jess supposed, soared above herself. She reflected miserably that, perhaps, she was a mere mummer, only able to play simple parts, malleable to the hand of producer and author. Ultimately, she took counsel with Miss Oldacre, stating her case with uncompromising fidelity. But Miss Oldacre, seeking for causes to explain effects, probed deeper.

'If it is true, Jess, that you are playing less well, that you are beginning to question your own powers as an actress, which



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we all do at times, and if you assign uneasiness of mind as a reason for this, I must ask you why your mind is uneasy.'

Jess remained silent.

'Perhaps my wish to help you is greater than your wish to be helped.'

Her voice was as soft as her eyes. Jess said:

'I hate to admit certain things to myself.'

'Yes; to do that requires real courage.'

After a pause, Jess went on:

'I—I don't know whether I married Cherry for love. I—I wanted to be loved by him. You remember Florrie?' Miss Oldacre nodded. 'Florrie told me that she would marry when she loved a man better than she loved herself.'

'Quite sound.'

'But how can one make sure? Anyway, a partnership with Cherry seemed to me just right. He wanted to write plays; I wanted to act plays; he loved me; I thought I could make him happy and be happy. I didn't make him happy. And now I am unhappy.'

'I see.'

'If I had not married, if I had given myself, as you did, entirely to my profession, I should be happy.'

'Provided you succeeded.'

'If I remained happy, I should succeed.'

'Are you unhappy, because you think you have made Cherry unhappy?'

'I have made two other men unhappy.'

'Two——?'

Under sympathetic pressure and solemn pledges of secrecy, Jess entered the confessional box. No priest could have listened to a penitent with greater understanding than that which informed Miss Oldacre, or with a livelier sense of the issues involved. This talk took place at the time when Cherrington was sending his script to Ambrose, and torn in two between his desire to return to his wife and the conviction that if he did so the play intended for her would never be written. During the past three weeks, George, it appeared, had lost his head and his heart, jumping to the conclusion that his Jess had been unwarrantably annexed by a heartless, cold-blooded scribbler, who had deserted his bride at the first opportunity. Mr. Lenox Hambrough, with less excuse for mental aberration, was of the same opinion.

'I thought they were pals.'

'I am sure you did. Go on!'

'I can't. It's too hateful. They "burst" almost simultaneously, within twenty-four hours of each other. They did it here, in this room. I shall never like this room again. I can understand why some women buy new furniture. What makes it worse, they were sitting in that chair.' She indicated a most respectable eighteenth-century chair of the Chippendale period. 'And it belongs to Cherry. I can't sell it without his asking questions.' She concluded viciously: 'An accident will happen to that chair.'

Miss Oldacre laughed, but she was intensely sorry for Jess. Nevertheless her sense of humour was tickled. She observed slyly:

'If you had made them happy, Jess, I should be very miserable. The unhappiness of these naughty boys doesn't distress me at all.'

'They accused me of being cold-blooded. Perhaps I am. Jack—he is Mr. Hambrough now—was a real pal when I played Leila. And, as you know, I have to play with him in this piece. But it won't last till Christmas. The notices may go up at any time, the sooner the better. It comes to this. I don't know where I am. I'm not in the next production, for one thing. But Mr. Welfare tells me that his play is done. Suppose I can't play a big part?'

Miss Oldacre consoled her.

#### IV.

Within a day or two, Miss Jessica Yeo received a registered parcel, which held Welfare's comedy, beautifully typed.

She devoted Sunday afternoon to reading it. Her part, if she accepted it, would demand all the resources of a finished actress. Failure to play such a part adequately would provoke disaster. Miss Oldacre took the script to her bedroom on Sunday evening. On Monday morning, after breakfast, she delivered a portentous verdict.

'The part is greater than the whole. Mr. Welfare, evidently, has faith in you. I should have jumped at it in my best days, but, even then I should have trembled at the responsibility imposed. If you can do it, you may go round the world with it.'

The interest centres in you and on you. Up to the middle of the third act I see you. After that great things are expected—passion, terror, despair culminating in triumph. To hold all that, to sustain the tension, to tighten it till your audience is racked with excitement and suspense will try you high.'

'Too high?' murmured Jess, with faint interrogation.

'I don't know.'

'Who is producing this play?'

Again Jess, not without slight irritation, had to acknowledge ignorance. Why this absurd mystery? Miss Oldacre was prompt with her answer.

'You see, my dear, vanity is the besetting sin of our profession. Mr. Welfare would not like it known that anyone had turned down his play. For all we know to the contrary, he may not have submitted this to a manager. Are you pledged to play this part?'

'Not yet.'

'Well, you might ask him quietly what theatre he has in his eye, but he may not tell you. Was there a note?'

Jess produced the note, with the remark: 'He doesn't waste his ink.'

Welfare had scribbled one line:

'Does Miss Yeo want to eat this?'

'Take your time,' counselled her wise friend. 'As this is a *non-matinée* day, we might read the big scene together after luncheon.'

Jess kissed her gratefully.

When the appointed hour came, Jess gave the first reading. Miss Oldacre had recognised long ago her mimetic powers, her astounding receptivity further fortified by an excellent memory. But what would Jess make, uninstructed, of a big part? Really this was the first convincing test. Had she passion? Could she simulate passion if—as those naughty boys suggested—she was cold-blooded? In her heart, Nan Oldacre was furious with them, particularly with George, the selfish, blundering idiot. She sided with her own sex. She felt a certain exasperation when she thought of Cherry, leaving his ewe lamb at the mercy of ravening wolves. Indeed, she had considered the propriety of writing, urging him to return home. She could take household care from his shoulders. On second thoughts, however, she had not written, fearing to interfere between husband and wife. As a philosopher, she decided that if this nice couple loved each other Time would

adjust their little differences. To distract Jess, to make her happy again, engrossed her attentions and energies.

Possibly Jess had been piqued by her friend's candour. More probably she was unduly strung up by her misadventures. At any rate, she attacked her Goliath of a scene with the pluck of David.

'That's not bad, my dear.'

'I'm dying to see you at it.'

Miss Oldacre went at it consummately with unerring skill and experience.

'What a stick I am,' groaned Jess.

'You are not conceited, child. I ventured once to criticise a young relative, she replied pertly: "I earn a larger salary than you do, Aunt Nan." But she is resting now. Try again.'

Warmed by encouragement, Jess attacked again—and again. Determination and patience are the acolytes of Genius. Presently Miss Oldacre said, not too positively:

'Perhaps you can do it. Let's have tea.'

'I have never been so excited in all my life—except once.'

Then, meeting an interrogative glance, Jess blushed, thinking of herself with her hair rippling to her waist and an ivory brush in her hand. Miss Oldacre asked no questions, but she smiled inwardly as she reflected: 'I needn't ask who else was excited.'

The ladies enjoyed their tea.

That night, after the performance, Welfare saw Jess in her dressing-room. The big fellow looked more lethargic than ever, as if he were gorged with his new play. Jess was aware that he spoke lightly of what he esteemed to be his best work. He accepted a cigarette, and smiled at her. At a nod from Jess, the discreet Mrs. Hunkins went out.

'A square meal, eh?' said Welfare.

'I am trying to digest it. It's a wonderful part, Mr. Welfare. I—I can't thank you enough. If I let you down——?'

Welfare shrugged his shoulders.

'We are going a bit too fast, Jess. The play isn't accepted yet.'

'Have you approached any manager?'

He waggled a finger at her.

'Of course I have. Don't ask me who he is. He's considering the bally thing, probably at this very moment. He can take it or leave it. There are others. He may be a bit scared of you.'

I shouldn't say that, if I was. By the way, you have a warm admirer in Pumford, poor Crewe's general manager.'

Jess became alert.

'Pummy——! Then I know your manager. It's Mr. Godfrey Ambrose.'

Welfare chuckled.

'Poor Cherry!' he ejaculated.

'Why?'

'It must be disconcerting sometimes to have as sharp a little wife as you are. Yes; Ambrose has my stuff. Not a word! I look upon him as the liveliest and most enterprising of the new lot. He seems to see big possibilities in this play, *if you get over*. America, for instance. Would you go to America?'

'I should have to talk to Cherry about that.'

'There is no hurry. I have given Ambrose a clear week. If I could make a real pot out of this, I should retire.'

'You wouldn't.'

Welfare laughed at her solemn, incredulous face.

'Who knows? Years ago, I knew a good fellow who was on the Stock Exchange. He made his pile during the great rubber boom, cleaned up two hundred thousand, and invested the lot in gilt-edged securities, chucked speculation and all business for ever and ever. Poor devil!'

'Why do you call him that?'

'He has paid the bill. When he lived at Woking—Woking!!!—with a couple of servants, he was the happiest, jolliest chap in the world. Now, he keeps himself in cotton-wool. He is terrified that he may die. He carries a clinical thermometer in his pocket. I knew another good dog. He made his bit. And six months afterwards his doctor told him that he couldn't live a year. So he blew in every bob in that year. And he's still alive and kicking—himself.'

'I believe you would cut jokes at your own funeral.'

'I hope so. I am sure I shall be amused at my Memorial Service,' he got up, still chuckling, as he held out his hand.

'You have frightened me,' Jess confessed. 'If this play means so much to you, I—I funk it.'

'Bah! Win or lose—I enjoy my dinner. I enjoy my cigar. A big success might demoralise me. That's why I told you those two yarns. Bye-bye.'

Mrs. Hunkins came back. Jess began to remove her 'make

up.' Welfare, somehow, had aroused apprehensions. She wondered if Mrs. Hunkins could allay them.

'Do you believe in luck?' she asked abruptly.

'Who doesn't?'

'Do you think good luck is paid for?'

'Well, yes; I do. Nobody has nothink both ways, not even dressers. I had my dip in the lucky bag when Mr. Hunkins died. But, bless you, I was hardly beginning to enjoy myself when I come down with rheumatic fever.'

'Oh, dear! I've never come down with anything.'

'You will,' affirmed Mrs. Hunkins.

## V.

Jess lay awake that night, tossing upon an uneasy pillow, helplessly aware that circumstances beyond control were proving too strong for her. She might be asked to go to America. And Miss Oldacre was positive that an actress must take her call, back her luck or lose it. What had been said by the wise old lady, two days before, sank deep into a plastic mind. It required real courage to admit to oneself—facts. Such courage had never failed her at Sloden-Pauncefort. As a girl, she had realised that sheltered lives were lived under artificial conditions. Most of her neighbours and friends imposed upon themselves and others absurd standards and shibboleths. As a rule they had no appreciation of anything outside the Forest of Ys. George's father, the jolly squire, was revered because his covers always held foxes. Jess could remember the stranger who took a small house in the village for the summer. Nobody called upon him, except Mr. Yeo. Nobody, except Mr. Yeo, knew that he was a world-famous man of science. One day, the squire said bluffly: 'Who is this fellow, Yeo? Does anybody know anything about him?' And her father replied drily, 'He is a Past President of the Chemical Society, Royal Medallist and Davy Medallist, and an honoured member of half the learned associations in Europe and America.' The squire was slightly taken aback, but he growled out: 'Why has such a man come here?' Mr. Yeo replied grimly, sensible, perhaps, that his own claims to consideration were ignored in the sleepy village: 'I can tell you that, because he told me. He selected Sloden-Pauncefort, widely awake to the fact that everybody here would leave him alone with his research work, not



knowing or caring who he was.' Jess had been more impressed than the squire by her father's curt words. She had thought the more intelligently because speech was discouraged. Her revolt against meaningless rules, imposed by Authority with no better reason than the affirmation that Authority, in its time, kow-towed to the same inanities, had driven her from home. She wanted to escape; and she had escaped. For a few months she had exulted in her freedom, believing fondly that the world was her oyster. Now, when everybody accounted her the luckiest of young women she began to appraise this wonderful luck, to ask whither it was leading her.

Obviously, it was leading her from her husband. And, left alone, she had discovered her dependence on him. For example, to cite a tiny instance, gadding about to luncheons and suppers without him ceased to amuse. She missed his easy, pleasant comments upon these entertainments; she missed his little attentions, his never-failing solicitude for her comfort; she missed his kisses. Her cheeks flamed when she thought of 'Jack' and George. The hussar had written abjectly from Canterbury, entreating forgiveness. She could regard George, maternally, as a 'naughty boy.' In the hunting-field, he went out of his way to jump formidable obstacles. In his own words, he had taken an 'awful toss.' She divined that he must be badly bruised. Mr. Lenox Hambrough aroused no pitiful feelings. He had not apologised. With brazen effrontery, he dared to whitewash himself with the excuse that 'Change partners' was indelibly inscribed upon the alluring faces of grass widows! With small experience in such matters, she guessed that this was the considered opinion of men who labelled themselves as 'of the world.' She might expect other mortifying adventures so long as she remained unattached. The daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Yeo confronted this certainty with horror. Horror, however, was tempered by the humorous reflection that nobody can really escape from their parents. To her grave, she would carry certain inherited characteristics. Decency happened to be one of them. Obstinacy happened to be another. The spell of the footlights was not quite so potent, but the desire to prove herself something greater than a player of easy parts had increased. Her last resolution, before she fell asleep, shaped itself into compromise:

'I shall make good in this big part; then I shall become Mrs. Cherrington.'

A surprise awaited her, next morning. A shiny card, embellished with silver riband, informed her that Florrie was about to be married to Harry. To see Florrie, to ask her soul-stirring questions, became an imperious necessity. Mrs. Toop was in lodgings in Bloomsbury. Thither Jess betook herself at the first opportunity. By the luck of things, she found Florrie alone. Afterwards Jess wondered whether luck had anything to do with it. Florrie embraced her affectionately.

'You are a dear to come and see me,' she exclaimed.

Jess wasted no time.

'So you really love Harry better than yourself?'

This observation had to be explained. Florrie remembered what others said of her, not what she said of herself.

'He's so respectable, dear. Muds told me I must think of the future. If I could have played in London——! No complaints. Muds says to me: "Florrie, me girl, you won't never be another Miss Oldacre." That's Gawd's truth, isn't it?'

Jess admitted that the odds were against Miss Osborne being cast for 'Juliet' or 'Portia.'

'I could play "Juliet" now,' affirmed Florrie, blushing. 'Well, dear, I don't mind telling you that my Harry is not what the world calls a "Romeo," but he's a bit of all right. Muds and me both agree that the stage, so to speak, ain't a cosy corner, nothing snug about it, is there? Harry calls me his queen. You can't queen it in cheap lodgings, on tour.'

Florrie continued volubly, reminding Jess of parsons whose arguments in the pulpit are obviously intended to convince the preacher rather than the congregation. Florrie, glad to entertain so attentive a listener, began an indictment of the stage from the point of view of one who desired to persuade herself that she was right in leaving it.

'It's all make-believe, isn't it? You have to kid yerself into thinking you're somebody else. Lordy! I used to dream of some o' the "props," and wish they was mine, although I knew the stage-carpenter had knocked 'em together. Harry has let me buy our furniture at The London Area Furnishing Company. We shall pay for it out of income. Lovely stuff! A young gentleman in a frock coat told me exactly what I wanted.'

Jess kissed her, wished her luck, and went away, quite sure that Florrie knew what she wanted and had got it. At supper, she repeated to Miss Oldacre, almost *verbatim*, what Florrie had said.



'My dear, I have not met Harry, but Florrie will be the queen of her home.'

'Ought the wife to be queen, and her hubby a mere prince consort?'

'One of the two must reign. Can we blame the men because they take kingship for granted? We women have encouraged them to do so. But, always, a woman rules if she is the stronger. Strength is independent of sex. The woman who aspires to be dominant partner must ask herself whether or not she can sustain the rôle.'

'I suppose so.'

## VI.

Before that week was out, Jess was invited to call upon Mr. Godfrey Ambrose at the theatre in Shaftesbury Avenue which he controlled so efficiently. She was curious to meet a man of whom she had heard much and seen nothing. At the appointed hour, she was shown into a large room at the top of the building.

'Mr. Ambrose will be with you in a minute.'

Left alone, Jess surveyed the *mise en scène*. She discovered at a glance that Mr. Ambrose possessed an extensive dramatic library. Plays, ancient and modern, filled the bookshelves. Above them were many portraits of players past and present. Two easy chairs faced a cheerful wood fire; an immense desk was littered with papers. She decided that this room was much more than an office. It reflected faithfully a personality. The Persian carpet, the damask curtains, the ample hearth, lined with red unglazed Dutch tiles, indicated good taste. The windows were of opaque glass, palely amber. The dull light of a mid-November morning, filtering through these, became transmuted into sunshine. The room had a glow. Possibly, Mr. Ambrose desired to shut himself off from a wilderness of chimney pots.

Jess sat down to warm cold toes. Between her chair and the wall stood a mahogany pie-crust table, recognised as such because Cherry possessed one much like it, which he pronounced a 'gem.' Upon this table lay two scripts. Jess, without any wish to pry, saw that one script was Welfare's play. Having a carbon copy of it, she picked it up, intending to glance through the list of characters. As she did so, her eyes dilated, and a slight

gasp escaped her. The script lying alone on the pie-crust table was Cherry's. His name confronted her.

Hastily, Jess put back the Welfare play, and closed her eyes. Cherry had finished his play—and he had not told his wife—and he remained absent from her!

She felt herself trembling.

What did it mean?

Her first impulse was to rush from the room. Yeo common-sense saved an ignominious retreat. Mr. Ambrose, if he found an empty room, would infer that he was dealing with a vacuum, and dismiss her as such from consideration. When he came in, she must play a part, smile sweetly, answer all questions adequately, beguile him with the soft inflections of her voice.

'I shall behave like Jessica Yeo.'

She felt split in two. The half that was actress stared at the half that was wife. Some devil seemed to be whispering to the wife: 'Cherry doesn't love you. He's happy without you. You have been absorbed in yourself. He's absorbed in himself. This is your punishment.'

Ambrose came in, short, thick-set, Napoleonic.

'Sorry to keep you waiting, Miss Yeo. Some people have no sense of the value of time. Can I offer you a cigarette?'

'No, thanks.'

He sat down opposite to her, made himself comfortable, rested his arms upon the padded sides of the chair, and leaned back. Then he spoke curtly:

'Welfare wants you to play this big part. He tells me you have read it. Can you do it?'

'Are you offering it to me, Mr. Ambrose?'

'Not yet. Do you feel that you have enough experience to tackle it?'

'My experience is hardly visible to the naked eye.'

Ambrose laughed; he liked candour and modesty. Then he spoke in his most business-like tones.

'Of course, you know that your husband has sent me a very remarkable play.'

He paused for a moment. Fortunately, he was not looking at Jess, who winced. He got up, crossed to the pie-crust table, and picked up both scripts. Meanwhile, Jess recovered her composure. Let him take for granted that she knew. How could she confess to a stranger the humiliating truth?

Ambrose went on, tapping the scripts with nervous fingers.

'I have made up my mind, Miss Yeo. I shall rehearse immediately after Christmas *one* of these two plays. In Mr. Cherrington's play there is no suitable part for you.'

'I am aware of that, Mr. Ambrose.'

'Welfare's play in my opinion is not comparable with your husband's. Wrest, the critic, was immensely impressed by Mr. Cherrington's two first acts. He spoke to me about them. He read the third act last night. He is astonished at the power in it, and so am I. All the same, he knows what I know, that the production of a play, so serious, so obviously written with a tremendous moral purpose behind it, is a hazardous speculation. I doubt whether any other London manager would take the risk. But I have faith in the British playgoer, and I should be proud to produce such a play—win or lose. I will add one word more. I have here our finest romantic actor, and I have a string on him. He will play in my next production if he approves his part. I have not shown him Mr. Cherrington's script. But he will jump at such a chance. Now, this is my dilemma. If I do the Welfare play, I shall lose my leading man. He has a dozen offers at this moment. It is unlikely that I should get him back. Did your husband write this play at Chagford? It came from there.'

'He wrote the third act there.'

'I am not surprised. He has done a bold thing. It is plain to me that he has written with absolute detachment, with the determination to satisfy himself—regardless of everybody else.'

Jess nodded.

'I admire and respect his courage. I return to the Welfare play. Humanly speaking, that is a "sitter," if—if you, or some other capable young actress, can make good. Nobody has a greater sense of the stage than Welfare. He writes for a large public whom he understands. Managers ask for his plays, because, as a rule, they are winners. Welfare can place this comedy of his with two actresses of experience, one under her own management; the other cannot come to me. But Welfare wants you. He admits that he wrote this play for you. Are you following me closely?'

'I am treading on your heels, Mr. Ambrose.'

'I cannot do the Welfare play unless you play in it. And I must decide at once. Mr. Cherrington, also, asks for a quick-decision. The situation is rather dramatic. Welfare tells me

that your husband knows that this play was written for you, but I gather that Mr. Cherrington does not know that I have it.'

'I—I don't think so.'

'I am wondering whether he would sooner I did his play or offered you a terrific part. Possibly, you don't realise that it is—terrific.'

'Indeed I do.'

'I should shrink, Miss Yeo, from asking your husband to make a decision. Besides, I make my own decisions. In this case, my decision hangs on you. I cannot ask so clever a young lady, so surprisingly successful, to rehearse on approval. And, if I did, and if you consented, and withdrew later, how could I replace you? But I thought, under the very exceptional circumstances, that you might read to me, here and now, the big scene, so as to give me some inkling of your capacity to play it. Really, it is a question of diction—intonation—feeling. I am quick at forming an opinion. Wait one moment. I would point out to you that if I decided—in your interests as much as my own—that you lacked the power to sustain such a weighty rôle, you would have the satisfaction of knowing that I was pledged to do your husband's play. I am willing so to pledge myself.'

'I understand.'

She paused, drawing in her breath sharply, conscious of nothing except an extraordinary, overwhelming desire to show this man what she could do. He looked at her with doubtful eyes. So had Miss Oldacre. She was wrought to such a tension that she simply leaped at this opportunity to release the feelings she had suppressed so rigorously. To just such a tension Welfare had brought his heroine.

'I'll try,' she said.

The tone of her voice challenged attention. It thrilled a man not easily moved. He said gratefully:

'This is very good of you.'

Jess jumped up, holding out her hand for the script. Ambrose saw that she was trembling.

'The right temperament,' he thought.

She turned over the crisp pages, till she came to the big scene. Then she moved away from Ambrose, who swung round in his chair. Jess glanced at the stage directions. She sat down, and began. Presently she rose, moving nearer to Ambrose as she read. He remained in his chair, captivated by her soft voice.

Long before she reached the climax, he had decided that Welfare was right. She could do it. Passion quivered out of her. Ambrose, rigid himself with excitement, divined somehow that a soul was in anguish. The effect produced on him became uncanny, weird. It seemed to him, a kindly man, that he had asked too much, that what he exacted was causing suffering.

'Stop, please!'

He held up his hand.

Jess heard his peremptory voice. For some time he had ceased to be so far as she was concerned. It was no simulated emotion that came from her. She had been swept leagues and leagues away to far Devon. She was speaking to her husband, revealing herself in an ecstasy of passion and despair to a man whose love she had forfeited.

The sharp injunction was obeyed mechanically. She stood limp before him, vaguely understanding that the ordeal was over. To save her life, she couldn't have passed judgment on her reading. Ambrose stood up.

'I am sorry,' he said gravely. 'I beg your pardon.'

'You don't think I can do it?'

'I know you can do it. I haven't a doubt left. I am sorry that I imposed such a strain. I offer you the part with enthusiasm; I beg you to accept. We shan't quarrel about terms.'

Jess burst into tears.

Ambrose, much upset, ministered to her as well as he could, insisting that she should drink a glass of wine, trying to make light of her breakdown, but thinking to himself: 'This girl is a bundle of nerves. I must take great care of her. What a sensitive plant!'

However, to his immense relief, she recovered self-control within a few minutes. She smiled at him faintly:

'What a fool you must think me!'

He reassured her on that point.

Before she left him, he demanded an answer to the insistent question.

'Will you play this part, Miss Yeo?'

'I must have time.'

'But certainly. Six weeks, seven weeks, if you like, although I am no believer in too many rehearsals.'

'I must have a few hours, I mean, to decide whether I can accept the engagement.'

Ambrose frowned, wondering whether Miss Yeo employed an agent, who might demand a prohibitive salary. Jess was now alert enough to interpret the frown.

'It is not a question of terms, Mr. Ambrose.'

His face cleared.

'That's quite all right, Miss Yeo. Let me know as reasonably soon as you can.'

Upon the threshold of the door she paused.

'You really meant what you said just now?'

'Meant it? If you don't triumph gloriously, I am the biggest ass in the profession.'

'Thank you. I—I was speaking of your promise to do my husband's play, if—if you couldn't do Mr. Welfare's.'

Ambrose looked disconcerted, but he said curtly:

'I keep my promise. If Welfare's comedy can't be done with you, I shall accept your husband's play.' He laughed pleasantly, 'Do you want that in writing?'

'Of course not.'

As the door closed behind her, Ambrose pulled a pipe from his pocket, and filled it pensively. On rare occasions, when he was mentally perturbed, he muttered to himself. He did so now, staring at the two scripts.

'You *are* the biggest ass in the profession. Why did you lug in the husband?' Then, puffing at his pipe, he added, 'I don't care. I shall do one or 'tother.' He sat down near the fire, and picked up both scripts. But he began to re-read the Welfare comedy.

(To be continued.)

## MEMORIES OF THE PRINCE IMPERIAL AND THE TUILERIES.

BY MRS. GODFREY PEARSE.

THE death of the Empress Eugénie recalls vividly to my mind the year 1862, when, with my father and mother (Mario and Grisi), we all went to Paris after their great triumph in Dublin. Both the Emperor Napoleon and the Empress were kind friends to my parents, especially the Emperor, who had known my father in London when both were exiles—my father, the young Marchese di Candia, driven from the Sardinian Court and Army because he would not betray friends suspected of 'revolutionary tendencies'; the Emperor, the proscribed nephew of the great Napoleon. The Emperor never forgot those days in London, and when my father went to Paris never lost an opportunity of showing his regard and his friendship.

We stayed at the Hôtel du Louvre. My three sisters and myself were constantly sent for to play with the little Prince Imperial. I can see him now, such a pretty child, with small features, very curly hair of golden brown colour, and eyes like the Empress with long eyelashes. The rooms to which we usually went in the Tuileries were three in number and looked upon a great courtyard. The first was an ante-room with red satin hangings; in the second stood three rocking-horses; the third was a sitting-room. Here, on two occasions, we found the Prince sitting for his portrait, a pencil drawing. On the second occasion when we arrived the Prince jumped from his chair, and snatching the drawing from the easel dashed off down the big corridor at the back of the rooms, waving the portrait over his head and stammering out (he stammered very much as a child) that he would not sit still any longer! The entourage went in pursuit and after much commotion, tears on the Prince's part—and on ours—we were not allowed to remain to play with him, but were sent home as a punishment to his little Imperial Highness.

My younger sister Clelia (afterwards Mrs. Vaughan) was the Prince Imperial's favourite. She was never afraid of doing anything he told her to do from tumbling off a rocking-horse to playing soldiers, or hide and seek, games which invariably ended in a noisy



scrimmage, nurses and governesses on both sides having to interfere! He was a high-spirited, impulsive child. Once he pulled Dr. Conneau's little boy off the rocking-horse in order that Clelia might get on, and hurt him in the fall. The little Prince stammered out, 'I am so sorry! Unloose his belt! Rub him hard!' These rooms in which we used to play were destroyed during the Commune in 1871. Nearly every day when it was fine we used to wait during our walks in the Bois de Boulogne for the four-horsed calèche, with its outriders and escort of cavalry, that announced the little Prince's daily drive; and used to hail him with screams of delight, for he always stopped to talk to us, and would often get down to run about with us and to share the toys and cakes that were brought with him.

The Emperor and Empress used to come in sometimes and watch our games. She was very beautiful, but I think we children were rather afraid of her. The last time I saw the Emperor was when he took Clelia and me alternately in his sleigh on the ice in the Bois, the last winter we spent in Paris (1867). Attached to the sleigh was a large carved gilt swan, and there was a lovely fur rug inside, which the Emperor pulled up himself and tucked round us. The sadness of his expression was noticed even by us children. Poor Emperor! We little knew how he was suffering in mind and body!

The following is a story which I do not think is generally known of the Empress's attitude to the war with Germany. So much has been said, conjectured and denied that I think it is of historical interest. After the terrible *débâcle*, the Duke de Gramont, one of the Emperor's most faithful and devoted servants, came to London. My father went one day to see the Duke, taking me with him. The Duke talked of the Emperor with tears in his eyes, and told us this incident of which he himself had been a witness. One day, shortly before the Franco-German war was declared, the Emperor was discussing the situation with the Duke. He held a gloomy view, saying that he knew he was doomed, and that the Imperial house and the country would suffer from the war.

Suddenly the door opened and the Empress entered in a state of great excitement, bursting into their conversation. She argued hotly of the triumphs France would gain from the war, growing more and more vehement as the Emperor tried to calm her. Finally, he refused to listen to her. She rushed to one of the great windows, and struggled with the fastening.



'What are you going to do?' cried the Emperor in alarm.

'I am going to shout to the people from this window "You have but one coward in France, and that man is the Emperor!"'

'And she would have done it too,' added the Duke. Then he added, 'The Emperor was no coward, as you know. He knew, alas! too well, Bismarck's policy and the power of a united Germany.'

The Duke also told us of the Emperor's departure from Paris for the front. 'The day we left Paris,' he said, 'I was near my Emperor who already looked worn and tired. Turning to look back he murmured "Good-bye, dear Paris! I shall never see you again."' A prophecy that came true.

When the Prince Imperial was leaving England for the Zulu war my brother-in-law, Arthur Vaughan, was amongst those on the platform gathered to see him off. The Prince asked affectionately after his little play-mate of the old Tuileries days, my sister Clelia—a touching instance of his affectionate nature of remembrance. We were told by Madame Conneau that when, after the tragedy of his death, the Empress collected all his letters and papers, among them were several of our childish notes to him when he was a little boy.

## EARLY ARABIAN POETRY.

BY MRS. HAMISH MACCUNN.

WHAT 'Alpines' are to other garden flowers that is the early præ-Islamic Arabian poetry to all other poetry. And as 'Alpines' seem to derive their delicate texture, exquisite colour, and clear-cut foliage less from the earth than from brief, brilliant sunshine and snow vapour, so these early Arabian poems draw inspiration from the clean, fierce, poignant human drama, with no softening background of the beauty of earth or the consoling mysteries of religion. So independent and complete in itself is this classic poetry of Arabia that we can all enjoy it in the beautiful translations of Sir Charles Lyall and the rich and spirited verse of Mr. Wilfrid Blunt, without more preliminary study of sources, conditions, and contemporary literature than they give in their several admirable introductions and notes.

We must, of course, disembarass our minds of all recollection of the fascinations of the Arabian Nights and of what knowledge we may have gathered of the rich culture—scientific, philosophical, historical—of the early khalifate. With these we have nothing to do. Our period dates from some seventy years before the Hegira (550 A.D.), about which date the famous ode of Imra-al-Kais (the oldest of the known great Arab poets) was written, to 850 A.D., when the Hamâsah, the anthology from which many of Sir Charles Lyall's translations are drawn, was collected; roughly therefore a period of three hundred years. For the first half of our period these poems were current on the lips of the poets themselves and of rhapsodists who wandered from tribe to tribe and from court to court. In the latter half these poems were eagerly collected and edited by Arab scholars who, beginning as grammarians, ended as humanists.<sup>1</sup>

Taking a bird's-eye view of what was happening in the rest

<sup>1</sup> There are elements of romance in the collecting of these poems that remind one of the labours of our own collectors of ballads. The Hamâsah was the work of one Abû-Tammân, himself a distinguished poet. On a winter journey he was storm-stayed by heavy snow at Ecbatana at the house of a friend who possessed a library containing MSS. of many Arab poets. Having sufficient leisure in the long winter days he read these MSS. and selected passages from which he formed his Hamâsah (cf. Nicholson's *History of Arab Literature*, p. 129). Had such a stroke of good fortune only befallen Scott and Leyden in some Border mansion in a prolonged snowstorm!

of the world during these three centuries one finds the map pretty blank and rather chaotic. In Europe it was the period we call 'the Dark Ages' when the old world with its classical culture had practically disappeared and the young nations who were to form mediæval Europe and develop a new culture had not fully emerged. What concerns us is the fact that poetry, that divine companion who has dwelt with man from the beginning of recorded time—speaking now in one articulate tongue now in another—finding no roof to cover her head in the ruins of Rome and Greece and little welcome in the rough camps and bare monasteries of emerging Europe, did for these three centuries find a resting-place in the parched uplands of Central Arabia.

Nor need geographical conditions detain us long. It is always a surprise when looking at the map to find the Arabian Peninsula so vast and so blank. A map—had there been one—of præ-Islamic Arabia could hardly have contained fewer names than it does at present. No estuary breaks the coastline of that vast square peninsula; where there are no rivers, there are no cities.

On either side the Arabia of our period touched on old civilisations, still imposing though in decay. In the Euphrates valley the Arab kingdom of Irak had grown up under the protection of Persia. Hīrah the capital has this interest for us, that its kings were friends and patrons to many of our poets. On the other side of the Syrian desert another Arab kingdom under Byzantine protection had Ghassan as the capital. The court at Hīrah was fluctuatingly, the court of Ghassan definitely Christian. A poet out of favour at Hīrah was apt to carry his tribute to the King of Ghassan. In one such complimentary poem is a graceful recognition of the definitely Christian character of the Ghassanid kingdom.

'Their home is in God's own land, His chosen of old: their faith  
Is steadfast: their hope is set on nought but the world to come.  
Their sandals are soft and fine, and girded with chastity  
They welcome with garlands sweet the dawn of the feast of Palms.'<sup>1</sup>

In the prevalent, contented paganism of early Arab poetry you meet curious and pleasing traces of Christian ways; once and again you meet hermits whose nightly lamps shine afar over the waste.

Arabia Felix, the Sheba of Solomon's days, the fertile southern region watered by the monsoon, had been the seat of an old

<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Lyall's *Ancient Arabian Poetry*, p. 96.

civilisation, an ancient mart of trade between India and the Mediterranean. When our period begins (550 A.D.) this tract, El Yemen, had fallen into the background under the suzerainty of Persia. But it has been suggested that the poetry which we are to find in the deserts of Central Arabia in full maturity may have had its beginnings in the early and rich civilisation of El Yemen.

The life which this poetry brings before us with such fresh and convincing realism is the life of the countless tribes who, having their fixed settlements in what watered places are to be found in the Hejaz and in the lands bordering the Persian Gulf, spread during the months of winter and spring over the high pastures of the inland region of Najd.

Something we must know of the conditions of life afforded by these regions if we would enter into the entire truth to fact of this early Arab poetry.

At all times the wandering peoples of that vast but waterless and treeless region must have lived constantly on the margin of their food supply: a fact that has largely shaped their national character and destiny. From the earliest times there must have been settlements wherever underground waters—'the waters under the earth' of the Second Commandment—form muddy pools or deeper springs built round by masonry, the work of ancient dwellers in the land. There, in immemorial usage, patient camels still raise priceless water by means of a wheel. There date groves are grown within clay walls, and within those walls men still build towers (as in the parable of the rich man who built a vineyard) where they can dwell in safety and stand a siege if necessary. In irrigated patches meagre crops are harvested and short herbage is found for the flocks of goats and sheep and herds of camels. Camels have always been the wealth of the Arabs, horses the luxury of the richer men among them. They seemed to have been used chiefly for warfare, and were so precious that foster camels were often kept to feed with their milk specially valuable mares. The praise of these camels and horses is a constant theme in Arabian poetry.

Monotonous and lethargic must have been the sultry summer months in the settlements. But from the beginning of the autumn equinox and lasting through the four months of winter and spring, showers fall on the sun-baked uplands of Najd and there springs up a rich juicy herbage radiant with flowers such as the wild tulips, small wild irises, rockets, pimpernels, a special pink crucifer (like

wallflower) and the all-pervading camomile. This outburst of flowers is doubtless what Isaiah refers to when he writes: 'The wilderness shall blossom like the Rose.' Up to these pastures from earliest times the tribes have driven their herds of camels and smaller flocks of goats and sheep. During these short and glorious months, milk abounds in the tents, butter is made and clarified and stored in skins. The animals of the flock are only slain on occasions of rejoicing or of great hospitality, and, as in the early days of Israel, with a certain religious ceremonial. Life is cheerful and abundant during these four months till the waxing heat parches up the grass, dries up the water courses and sends the tribes back to the duller routine of the settlements. Each tribe had its own pasture grounds where tents were pitched, and beyond these the flocks and the women did not wander, though the men might ride far afield on visits or forays.

We do not need the many stories of the Old Testament to convince us that wells and pasture lands must have always been a cause of fierce contention. From sheer necessity the Arabs early fell on the arrangement that the sacred months during which war was unlawful should synchronise with the flow of food during the spring months.

Such were the austere but picturesque conditions in which was developed and perfected the poetry of the 'Jahilyya.' The Jahilyya, signifying the 'time of the Ignorance,' is the name given by the Islamic Arabs to the centuries before the coming of the Prophet, yet to this time of the Ignorance they looked back as to the golden age of their literature, and with good reason. For the poetry that has come down from that age is not a primitive poetry; in it you will find no crudities, no references to gross superstitions, to magic spells, or imaginary monsters. Scholars tell us that the language had already attained at this period to perfect flexibility and expressiveness. The form of the poetry has the regularity, the directness and the reticence of a long practised, highly finished art. Perhaps the surest sign of its maturity is its entire sincerity, its intensity; the eyes both of the poet and of his audience were directly on the object. One of the best of their poets sums up this quality when he says:

'Of all the verses which thou hast made, the fairest in praise  
Is that whereof, when they hear, men say: Yea, that is the Truth.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted on the title-page of Sir Charles Lyall's *Ancient Arabian Poetry*.

Consequently nothing in this poetry has fallen meaningless through change of time and place. Men stand by each other and fight and fall to exact vengeance; they glory in the pace of their mares and the multitude of their camels; they boast of reckless generosity in meat and drink; in the masterfulness of young manhood they woo beautiful, willing Arab women; they mourn the death of wife or child or fallen comrade; and we, feeling them so like ourselves, so like true men in all ages, say with Zuheyr the poet, 'Yea, this is the truth.'

High was the position of an accredited poet in the time of the Ignorance. He was the glory of his tribe, his satires were like arrows scathing the ranks of the enemy, by his verse he could bestow immortality on friend or patron, his words preserved the honour of his tribe.

The Arabs used to wish one another joy but for three things: the birth of a noble boy, the coming to light of a great poet, the foaling of a noble mare.

This poetry, so free in its movement, so fresh in feeling, so rich in content, used certain definite conventions. The seven great odes all follow more or less the following plan:

First the poet tries to arrest the attention of his hearers by appealing to the most universal of emotions—the love of some woman definitely named. This love is generally reminiscent, evoked by the sight of the forsaken places where once her tent was pitched. Follows the main theme of the poem, often the praise of horse or camel, the description of a hunt in the desert, or, more often, the story of a fight with the glorification of the poet's own deeds. Often the poem ends up with the description of a storm in the mountains.

A strange convention doubtless to us who ignore the secret suggestions and connections that these changing themes may have had in the ears of the first hearers. All literary periods have their conventions. How often in mediæval poetry do we meet—and are always glad to meet—the May morning and the greenwood with its singing birds, and the enclosed garden and the allegorical ladies? So listeners in the tent of some Bedouin sheikh or guests at the courts of Hīrah and Ghassan would recognise and welcome an introduction like this where the poet Zuheyr describes how twenty years after he revisited the camp where his wife had pitched her tent.



'Are they of Umm Afa's tents—these black lines that speak no word

In the stony plains of al-Mutathallam and ad-Darrâj ?

The wild kine roam there, large-eyed, the deer pass to and fro,  
And their younglings rise up to suck from the spots where they  
lie all round.

I stood there and gazed ; since I saw it last twenty years had flown,  
And much I pondered thereon, hard was it to know again ;  
The black stones in order laid in the place where the pot was set,

Good greeting to thee, O house !—fair peace in the morn to  
thee !' <sup>1</sup>

It is told of Zuheyr that after this wife had borne him many children who all died young, he in a moment of anger divorced her ; afterwards he repented and would have had her return, but she would not. It is not fanciful to trace a wistful regret in these verses.

In strong contrast to the peaceful solitude and the pensive reflection it evokes is the ending of another ode built on the same convention. The author is Imra-al-Kais, the earliest and one of the best of the Arabian poets.

'O friend ! see the lightning there ! it flickered, and now is gone  
As though flashed a pair of hands in the pillar of crownèd cloud.

We sat there, my fellows and I, 'twixt Daraj and Al-Udaibh,  
And gazed as the distance gloomed and waited its on-coming.  
The right of its mighty rain advanced over Katan's Ridge ;  
The left of its trailing skirt swept Yadhbul and As-Sitâr,  
Then over Kutaifah's steep the flood of its onset drove  
And headlong before the storm the tall trees were borne to ground ;  
And Taimâ—it left not there the stem of a palm aloft,  
Nor ever a tower save one firm built on the living Rock.

And the topmost crest on the morrow of Al-Mujaimir's cairn  
Was heaped by the flood-borne wrack like wool on a distaff wound.  
At earliest dawn on the morrow, the birds were chirping blithe,  
As though they had drunken draughts of riot in fiery wine ;  
And at even the drowned beasts lay where the torrents had borne  
them, dead,

High up on the valley sides like earth-stained roots of squills.' <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Lyall's *Ancient Arabian Poetry*, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

Taimá is an age-long oasis where men still trade in dates and *perhaps* are still famous for wisdom as in the days when Eliphaz the Temanite was the only one of Job's friends to speak wisely.

As we read the description of the desert storm, our minds revert inevitably to that great wind that blew from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house where the sons of Job were feasting with their sisters.

Because the author of Job has set his universal and eternal drama in an Arab setting, it is inevitable that we should look for points of similarity. As a matter of fact the main points of contact are the descriptions of the wild animals of the desert, as distinct and full of life in the Ode of Labid as in the Book of Job. We all know the untamed ass in Job. Here are a wild pair as Labid saw them driven by thirst from the fiery uplands to seek the far-off water brooks.

'Nay a fair wild ass she ; at her side the white-flanked one,  
 .He the scarred ass-stallion, bitten and struck for her.  
 Climbed they two the hill-top, he the bite-scarred ass-tyrant,  
 Her new mood resenting, being in foal to him.

Six months of Jumada (the winter) wandered have they waterless,  
 Browsing the moist herbage, he her high sentinel,  
 Till returned their thirsting, need of the far water clefts,  
 All their will to win there, speeding them waterwards,  
 What though with heels wounded, still the hot wind driveth them  
 As a furnace burning, fire scorched the breath of it.

He, when her pace slackened, pushed her still in front of him,  
 Nay, she might not falter, tyrant he urged her on,  
 Till they reached the streamlet, plunged and slaked their thirst in it,  
 A spring welling over, crest high the reeds of it.' <sup>1</sup>

The fire and pride of the war horse in Job breathe through many an Arab description, but tender is this picture of a horse wounded in battle. If only an Arab could have written it, only an Englishman among the moderns can quite enter into the spirit of it.

'Ha ! the brave stallion !

Now is his breast dyed with blood drops, his star-front with fear  
 of them !

<sup>1</sup> The translation is that of Mr. Wilfrid Blunt.



Swerved he as pierced by the spear points. Then in his beautiful  
 Eyes stood the tears of appealing, words inarticulate,  
 If he had learned our man's language, then had he called to me,  
 If he had known our tongue's secret, then had he cried to me.'<sup>1</sup>

On the whole it is curious how little one is reminded of the Bible in these poems. Of course, many Old Testament incidents have their parallel in Arab story, such as the scouting adventure of Purah and Gideon, the treacherous murder of Abner in a gateway on a day of peace. You feel that in essential character Saul and David were blood brothers of many Arab sheikhs, but their story is told to us by a religious historian, set against a background of an agricultural community, a settled polity and an authoritative religion, whereas our Arab stands stark against the rocky desert, the loose democracy of the tribe, and the primitive warrior's indifference to all religion.

To the Arab there was no security, water courses might suddenly dry up, hostile or marauding tribes might fall on herds and flocks as in the first chapter of Job. Caravans or single travellers in the desert viewed approaching groups with well-justified suspicion as in the story of Duraid: 'A sentinel posted on the sandhills cried: "I see a folk coming—their hair is crisp and curly, and their shirts are dyed with saffron." "They are of Ashja," said Duraid, "I care not for them." "I see others," said the sentinel, "who look like boys. They carry the points of their lances between their horses' ears." "They are of Fazarah," said Duraid. "And there come others, dark and tawny of skin, who raise a black cloud of dust; they trail their spears after them as they gallop along." "These are of Abs and death comes with them," said Duraid.'<sup>2</sup> Does not this give one the same thrill as the reading of the Border Beacon when the English were making a foray: 'They are coming *indeed* and mean far'?<sup>3</sup>

So many and so deadly were the feuds of the Arab tribes that death might come of any chance encounter in the desert. The traveller had need of caution.

'He journeyed with Wariness, and where he halted,  
 Wariness halted herself, his comrade.

<sup>1</sup> *Ode of Antara* translated by Mr. Wilfrid Blunt.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Charles Lyall's *Ancient Arabian Poetry*, pp. 38-40.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Lean-sided and thin, but not from lacking,  
 Liberal-handed, keen-hearted, haughty ;  
 A rushing rain-flood when he gave of his fullness,  
 When he sprang to the onset, a mighty lion.'

Such is the type of the Arab sheikh of the times of the Ignorance, and in endless odes of boasting or panegyric the traits are repeated.

Three virtues grew out of the stern conditions of desert life : a prodigal generosity whether in dearth or fullness, a sacred sense of hospitality born from the reality of surrounding perils, and unhesitating loyalty to friends and kindred. The first I need not illustrate ; the second, hospitality, secured the claim of any stranger, fugitive or even enemy who had reached the shelter of a man's tent or had shared his meat and drink. This sacred bond of hospitality is familiar to us all in the pages of the Old Testament : 'He prepareth a table for me in the presence of mine enemies' is an image drawn from this desert courtesy ; it is the violation of this universally recognised claim that makes the treachery of Jael so abhorrent. Various Arab stories tell of the chivalry of women who, if a fugitive have but touched the ropes of their tents or the hem of their garment, have without question thrown their veil over him and defied their tribesmen to lay hands on him.

This promptness to render help, to ask no question concerning the matter in hand, to mount and ride as if in one's own quarrel, is the much praised virtue of clansmen in all primitive societies, whether it be Jamie Telfer bringing the fray to every keep on Teviotside that the men may rise and recover his stolen kye, or the Arab poet who boasts :

'Our wont was, when one came calling to us for help in his need,  
 The answer we gave him back was the smiting of our shins.'

('That is, they were already mounted before he had done calling, and had started their horses at the gallop by smiting their own shins with the whip—the horses being too generous to require blows to make them go.')

Right or wrong, in prudent action or in reckless folly, a man stood by his kin. On the occasion when Duraid read the deadly quality of the oncoming men of Abs, he had warned his brother of the folly of delaying in the hostile desert to feast and to divide the spoil after a successful raid. Open-eyed he shared their folly as later he shared their peril.

<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Lyall's *Ancient Arabian Poetry*, p. 2.

'But when they would hearken not, I followed the road, though I  
Knew well they were fools, and that I walked not in wisdom's  
way.

For am not I but one of Ghaziyah? and if they err  
I err with my house, and if Ghaziyah go right, so I.' <sup>1</sup>

This solidarity of the tribesmen led to that curse of all barbaric societies, the blood feud transmitted from generation to generation. Revenge to the Arab was the satisfying of a physical appetite. Yet the dire obligation of carrying on the feud had the good result of making men less reckless of shedding blood. When Peace was made, the dead on both sides were counted and the balance paid for in the current wealth of the country—live camels. The finest of the seven great odes, that of Zuheyr, is the panegyric of two who by their unselfishness and wisdom and generous gifts made an end to the war of Dahis which had lasted forty years. There is no more delightful story in any language than the tale of the Wooing of Buhaisah which led to the action of these two noble peacemakers, Al-Harith her husband, and his cousin Kharijah, for Buhaisah was a spirited woman, chaste as Vashti, adroit as Esther, patriotic as Deborah.

It is Kharijah who tells the tale, for he accompanied his cousin when he went to win a wife among the daughters of Aus. The two kinsmen waited outside the house while Aus sounded his three daughters, for great freedom of choice was given to these desert women. And he said to her—the eldest of the three, 'O my daughter, this is Al-Harith son of Auf, he has come asking a boon that I should wed to him one of my girls, and I purposed to wed thee to him. What sayest thou thereto?' She answered, 'Do it not.' 'Why?' he asked. She said, 'I am a woman uncomely in face, faulty in temper; I am not his uncle's daughter that he should regard my kinship with him, nor is he thy neighbour in the land that he should be ashamed before thee; and I fear lest some day he see in me something which may displease him and divorce me, and there befall me therein what is wont to befall.' And he said, 'God bless thee. Call to me such an one,' naming his second daughter. (This lady has the same humorous candour as her sister, only she pleads 'ignorance and awkwardness and lack of skill with her hands.' One suspects that both these ladies were already provided with lovers. There is a glorious confidence in the frank acceptance of

<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Lyall's *Ancient Arabian Poetry*, p. 38.

the third sister Buhaisah.) 'Nay but I,' she said, 'am the fair in face, the skilful with her hands, the noble in nature, the honourable in her father, and if he divorce me, God will bring no good upon him hereafter.' So these two were wed. 'And when she was brought in to him'—it is still Kharijah who is speaking—'he stayed but a little space and came forth to me and I said, "Hast thou prospered?" "No," he said. "How was that?" He answered—"When I put forth my hand to take her she said, 'Stay! dost thou thus before my father and my brethren? Nay, by God this is not fitting.'" Then he commanded that the camels should be made ready and we started on our way taking her with us.' At the first halt when they turned aside for the night, Al-Harith fared no better—'He had tarried but a little when he joined me again, and I said—"Hast thou prospered?" "No," he answered. "Why?" said I. "She said to me—"Dost thou with me as with a woman-slave that is hawked about for sale or a captive woman taken in battle? Nay, by God, until thou slay the camels and slaughter the sheep and call the Arabs to the feast and do all that should be done for the like of me.'" I answered, "I see that she is a woman of a high spirit and understanding, and I hope that she will be to thee a wife that will bear thee noble sons, if God will.'" But the noblest outburst is when Al-Harith has made a feast and entertained his guests in honourable fashion, and having done all to fulfil her command seeks his wife in her tent. He himself tells the tale to Kharijah. "'Lo," I said, "I have made ready the camels and the sheep as thou seest." She answered me, "By God, I was told that thou hadst a nobleness which I do not see to be in thee." "How so?" I asked. She said, "Hast thou a light heart to wed women while the Arabs are slaying one another?" "What wouldst thou have me do?" She said, "Go forth to these kindred and make peace between them; then return to thy wife and thou shalt not miss what thou desirest.'"

'By God,' said Kharijah, 'A noble and wise woman! and she has spoken a goodly word.' And Al-Harith said, 'Come forth with me.' So we came forth and came to the two tribes (Aus and Dhubyān) and walked between them with peace.' And he adds, 'And we bore the burden of the blood-wits and there were in all three thousand camels which were paid in the space of three years.'

For this deed the two cousins received the highest reward that a noble Arab could ask for, the praise of a great poet.

'For thus ye spake : Let Peace be garnered, all the fair wealth of it,  
Based on pay and fair exchanges, ours to establish it,  
Their's the Peace and yours the Glory, high names and dignities  
You the noble twain prevailing, purging the rage of them.'<sup>1</sup>

The noble figure of Buhaisah leads us on naturally to ask if she may be taken as the type of her race or as the exception. Concerning the position of women in the teaching of Islam, it has generally—perhaps ignorantly—been taken for granted that it has been the fatal and paralysing defect in an otherwise simple and noble creed. In præ-Islamic Arabia, though the institution of facile divorce justified the fears of Buhaisah's sisters, in other respects the position of the desert woman indicates perfect freedom and something approaching equality. If she might be dismissed from her husband's tent, she had also the liberty to quit it by her own will. The love passages in the seven great odes are—to use that classic criterion that cannot be improved on—'simple, sensuous, passionate'; if they are sometimes voluptuous, it is a virile, open-air, joyous voluptuousness. Here is the picture of such a desert bride :

'Alas ! for the dark-lipped one, the maid of the topazes  
Hardly yet grown a woman, sweet fruit-picking loiterer !  
A girl, a fawn still fawnless, which browses the thorn bushes  
Close to the doe-herd feeding, aloof in the long valleys.

The face of her how joyous, the day's robe enfolding her,  
Clean as a thing fresh-fashioned, untouched by sad time fingers.'<sup>2</sup>

On their visits to cities such as Hifrah and Ghassan, the young sheikhs—it was their boast—would drink the wine-shops empty ; there also they met strange singing girls, Greeks or Persians.

There is a haunting charm in this description of such a nameless musician :

'Ay, sing to us ; we prayed her. And she, with monotony,  
Striking a low note slowly chaunted unchangingly.  
Oh, strange it was, that cadence ; it came back the wail of it,  
Grave as a mother's grieving the one son now slain from her.'<sup>3</sup>

In the poems that Sir Charles Lyall has selected for translation the references to women are serious and tender. They are largely drawn from the *Hamâsah*, a collection made in the ninth century,

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Wilfrid Blunt's translation.

<sup>2</sup> *Ode of Tarafa*, Mr. Wilfrid Blunt's translation.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

and may lack something of the distinctive desert flavour. Not that the poet lovers were town dwellers or men of quiet lives. There were outlaws in the desert, broken men cast out of their own tribes for violence, 'men of unquiet mettle, whose lawless spirits drive them to prowl like wolves in the desert.' Such a one, on his own showing, was Shanfara, who in his defiant address to his tribesmen, describes thus his companions in the desert :

'To me now in your default are comrades, a wolf unbred,  
A sleek leopard and a fell hyena with shaggy mane.'

(Whether these refer to the wild beasts, his actual neighbours or are nicknames for his friends, critics are not agreed.) At the end he asks for but three companions, a tough bow, a sharp sword, and an intrepid soul. Yet deep in his heart he kept the image of the wife of his youth, 'more moving delicate, and full of life than when she lived indeed.'

'So gone is Umaimah, gone—and leaves here a heart in pain :  
My life was to yearn for her and now its delight is fled.  
She won me whenas—shamefaced, no maid to let fall her veil,  
No wanton to glance behind—she walked forth with steady tread,  
Her eyes seek the ground as though they looked for a thing lost there.

She turns not to left or right, her answers are brief and low,  
She rises before day dawns to carry her supper forth  
To wives that have need—dear alms when such gifts are few enow.  
Afar from the voice of blame her tent stands for all to see,  
Where many a woman's tent is pitched in the place of scorn.  
No gossip to bring him shame from her must her husband dread :  
Where mention is made of women, pure and unstained is she.  
The day done, at eve, glad comes he home to his eyes' delight,  
He needs not to ask of her—Say ! where didst thou pass the day ?'<sup>1</sup>

And there is a note even more poignant in the poem in which another poet bewails the mother of his children, the tender, timorous woman whom he had loved and sheltered in the warm precincts of the cheerful day.

'Take thou thy way by the grave wherein thy dear one lies,  
Umm-al-Ala !—and lift up thy voice, Ah, could she but hear !  
How art thou come—for very fearful wast thou—to dwell  
In a land where not the most valiant but goes with quaking heart ?

<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Lyall's *Ancient Arabian Poetry*, p. 80.



God's love be thine and his mercy, oh, thou dear lost one !  
 Not meet for thee is the place of shadow and loneliness,  
 And a little one hast thou left behind, God's ruth on her !  
 She knows not what to bewail thee means, yet weeps for thee,  
 For she misses those sweet ways of thine which thou hadst with her,  
 And the long night wails and we strive to hush her to sleep in vain.  
 When her crying smites in the night upon my sleepless ears,  
 Straightway mine eyes brimful are filled from the well of tears.' <sup>1</sup>

Poetry of all languages is full of the passion of motherhood. A mother and a son—are they not the centre of all Christian Art ? Concerning the passion that fathers have for their women-children, poetry is curiously reticent. This love of fathers is composed of many elements. The little girl is not merely his daughter, she is the small image of her mother ; she is at once his ' lady ' and his white ewe lamb. And he knows the harsher side of the world and the disadvantages that women have laboured under in all societies, he knows too the shortness of his own life. What causes men to wear themselves out in business or profession, what has built up our vast life insurance businesses ? An Arab of the seventh century can tell us.

' Nay, but our children in our midst, what else  
 But our hearts are they, walking on the ground ? '

Little Arab girls were exposed to many risks ; in times of dearth the needs of the fighting sex had to be met first ; in times of war—and war was pretty constant—men faced death but women worse things than death, and as we have seen even marriage did not secure a woman's position in her husband's tent.

The pathos of the following poem is increased when we know that the child so dearly loved was in fact a child by adoption, a sister's child.

' If no Umamah were there, no want would trouble my soul,  
 No labour call me to toil for bread through pitchiest night.  
 What moves my longing to live is but that well do I know  
 How low the fatherless lies, how hard the kindness of kin.

My life she prays for, but I from mere love pray for her death—  
 Yea, Death the gentlest and kindest guest to visit a maid,  
 I fear an uncle's rebuke, a brother's harshness for her,  
 My chiefest end was to spare her heart the grief of a word.'

<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Lyall's *Ancient Arabian Poetry*, p. 54.



Shall we mourn or shall we be thankful that his sorrowful prayer was granted ?

'Gone is Umaimah to dwell where tall stones tell of the dead.  
 Poor waif at rest in the grave, laid safe at last in the dust.  
 O thou—one half of my soul, how mourns the half that is left  
 Athirst for thee, though the tears stream fast and fall from my eyes.  
 Ah me ! for her did I grieve, lest I should go to my grave  
 The first and leave her alone, unveiled, to battle with want.  
 But now I sleep and no care comes too nigh to trouble my sleep.  
 At last finds jealousy rest, when all it guarded are dead,  
 This is the kindness of Death—shall I deny him his due ?  
 Peace has he brought me, if pain be still the chief of his gifts.'<sup>1</sup>

In a world where ambush and combat and flight were daily occurrences, there were many opportunities for that devotion unto death of men in defence of their womenkind which we have learned to call 'chivalry.' Many elements in the most romantic chivalry of the Middle Ages came into Europe from the Arabian tradition either through Spain or brought by the Crusaders from contact with Eastern foemen and Eastern literature.

A warrior wounded to the death is guarding a pass to allow his womenkind to escape. His mother has bound up his wound with the command: 'Go and smite them while thy strength lasts.' So he went back again and faced them at the head of the pass and the women passed on with the best speed they could. And Rabbiah sat upright on his mare barring the road, and when he felt death coming upon him he leaned on his spear and stood in the twilight. And his enemies durst not attack, thinking not but that he was still living. Then one bade an archer who was with them to shoot an arrow at the mare, and he shot and the mare started aside and Rabbiah fell forward on his face, dead. When binding up his wound his mother had chanted :

'Now one is dead and now another dies,  
 Bereavement is our life from day to day.'

It is significant of a society where women accepted this stoical philosophy that the work of the women poets is mostly dirges for the fallen.

In the lament of the most famous of these poetesses, that of Alkhansa for her brother Sakhr occur two lines which correspond exactly with lines familiar and consolatory to all of us in these days :

<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Lyall's *Ancient Arabian Poetry*, p. 26

'At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them,'

writes Laurence Binyon.

And thirteen centuries earlier an Arab woman sang :

'Sunrise awakes in me the sad remembrance  
Of Sakhr and I recall him at every sunset.'

A mother of whom we know nothing but that her son in some far country met an uncertain death raises the old, the eternal cry, the same that once rang through Israel from a heart-broken king,

'Would my heart a moment's space could win patience, thou no more  
Would that I had gone thy way, met the doom instead of thee.'<sup>1</sup>

Mothers and sisters have their own sorrow. There is also the special pang known only to the men who have fought side by side over those who have fallen out of the ranks.

'My comrade rebuked my grief as we passed by a place of graves  
And down from mine eyes fell fast a burden of streaming tears.  
He said : "Dost thou weep each grave that thou seest, because of one  
That lies in the waste between ad-Dakádik and Al-Liwa?"  
I answered him, "Nay, pain wakes from slumber the pain of old,  
So let me alone, all these to me are but Malik's grave."'<sup>2</sup>

It is fine rhetoric when Shakespeare makes Antony say of the death of Caesar :

'Then I and you and all of us fell down.'

Nobler and simpler is this lament for a great chief :

'When Kais died it was not one who went down the way of Death,  
A people it was whose house with his death in ruin fell.'<sup>3</sup>

'Kismet,' the special Islamic contribution to the world's stock of religious ideas, may, indeed does, lead to apathy in politics

<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Lyall's *Ancient Arabian Poetry*, p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

and industry and to stagnation in national development, but this belief that none can avoid or anticipate the appointed day of death is the very nerve of the fighting man. Chaplains and others tell us that this is the central point of the soldier's belief.

Julian Grenfell's verse has been the fighting creed of many a man in France :

‘Through joy and blindness he shall know  
—Not caring much to know—that still  
Nor lead nor steel shall reach him, so  
That it be not the Destined Will.’

It was a kindred spirit that some thirteen centuries earlier thus exhorted his own soul :

‘I said to her, when she fled amazed and breathless  
Before the array of battle—Why dost thou tremble ?

Be still then and face the onset of death, high-hearted,  
For none upon earth shall win to abide for ever.

The pathway of death is set for all men to travel,  
The crier of death proclaims through the earth his empire.’<sup>1</sup>

We have said that there is no trace of religious belief or of ceremonial in these poems of the time of the Ignorance. But in Arabia it was impossible to escape from that Wisdom which has brooded, a witness to the Reality of the things of the Spirit, over all the lands of the East from the beginning of Time. That same poet who gave us the magnificent picture of the wild asses seeking the water brooks, seeks refuge himself from the transitoriness of life there where the wise have always sought it.

‘Yea, the righteous shall keep the way of the righteous,  
And to God turn the steps of all that abideth ;  
And to God ye return, ye too ; with Him only  
Rest the issues of things and all that they gather.  
All that is in His Book of Knowledge is reckoned  
And before Him revealed lies all that is hidden,  
Both the day when His gifts of goodness on those whom  
He exalts are as palms full freighted with sweetness.

And the day when avails the sin-spotted only  
Prayer for pardon and grace to lead him to mercy.

<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Lyall's *Ancient Arabian Poetry*, p. 17.

Yea, a place in His shade, the best to abide in,  
And a heart still and steadfast, right-walking, honest.

Long has life been to me and this is its burden,  
Lone against Time abide Ti'ar and Yaramram,  
And Kulaf and Badi the mighty, and Dalfa,  
Yea and Timar that towers aloft over Khubbah.  
And the stars, marching on all night in procession,  
Drooping westward as each hies forth to his setting.'<sup>1</sup>

We have lived an hour with these Arabs of the time of the Ignorance—say rather that like their own poets we have traced the lines of their deserted camps, their blackened hearthstones among the sands of the desert. The heart-breaking fact of history is that so many precious things—fair cities, wisely ordered polities, great poetry, gifted races, and noble types of character have appeared for a moment, and have passed away for ever. We can only repeat with Labid,

'Lone against Time abide Ti'ar and Yaramram,  
And the stars marching on all night in procession.'

<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Lyall's *Ancient Arabian Poetry*, p. 91.

### A FAMOUS KASHMIR DUCK SHOOT.

'A flock of birds came winging from the North,  
Strong birds with fighting pinions driving forth  
With a resounding call;  
When will they close their wings and cease their cries—  
Between what warring seas and conquering skies—  
And fold, and fall?'

ALICE MEYNELL.

THE writer of this paper has devoted a great deal of his time, hundreds of laborious days and desolate nights, to circumventing or trying to circumvent wild-fowl in the British Islands. For forty years he has had close companionship with them; in North Uist and the Cromarty Firth, in Donegal and Clare and Caithness, striving always to make the companionship a still closer one, and wasting no doubt in the operation some portion of his life. Therefore it was no new experience to find himself one November morning in the year before the war sheltering behind a screen of reeds and waiting for a signal shot that would announce the day's proceedings had begun.

At the first glance there might seem nothing very strange or unusual in my surroundings; there were the familiar stretches of marsh and open water on which many duck sat; mallard were quietly talking to each other and preening themselves, and small companies of teal and gadwall flew restlessly about, while high above them some disturbed geese spread out in their accustomed figures. All these birds seemed nearer than they really were; there had been a little frost in the night and sounds carried far; the air was perfectly still and not for a moment during that sunny day were the reflections of the mountains disturbed by a single ripple.

And yet there was a great difference; no such twelve-feet saw-edged reeds grow in Ireland or the north as those which stood up round my hiding-place; the men in sight were strange in colour and dress; the quiet waters on which they floated were after long wanderings to find their way into the Arabian Sea by the Indus, and the snowy peaks so clearly painted in them were the spurs of the Himalayas.

When winter begins to stretch his hands towards the north,

before he altogether seals up its lakes and tarns and lonely marshes, their wild-fowl begin the annual migration to India. How far must the birds travel? It would be a fascinating study, if it was a possible one, to follow their flight. They come from China and Russia and Siberia; they must pass over the crowded cities of Central Asia, Yarkand and Samarkand and Tashkent; perhaps some of them were reared on desolate shores in the 'land of the seven rivers,' or on the edges of great deserts still further to the north, and never saw a man till their long flight was well advanced. I have ventured to set half a dozen fine lines at the head of this paper as bearing on my subject, but I believe that Mrs. Meynell would emphatically repudiate my reading of the last word.

Great numbers of ducks and geese arrive in Kashmir in October and stay for a few days or weeks, and then move southwards, their places being continually occupied by others. There seem to be few lakes in India, as distinct from tanks; no Assynt—with its 200 lochs in one parish—is to be found in the great continent which stretches from Cape Comorin to the borders of Afghanistan. So this scarcity of water concentrates the wild-fowl and makes it possible to manœuvre them with much more certainty than would be possible at home. After October the flights grow less, but still birds keep coming in, and a small percentage remain to breed. Then in the spring the move is reversed, and many duck rest in Kashmir on the way to their northern homes.

Here, at home, those who are fortunate enough to own waters and marshes which are haunted by wild-fowl in large numbers usually treat the birds with great respect and consideration; it may be necessary now and then to disturb them on an unsuitable day, but if their host really loves his ducks, if they exercise over him the strange attraction they do over perhaps one man in a dozen, he will not do this without a pang, nor will he consider them only as adjuncts to a covert shoot, or a means by which his guests may put in another day after the pheasants are done with. He will place them far before pheasants and partridges, even before grouse, for you can make sure of grouse in a season if you have them, but never of the other fowl. Weather for wild-fowl shooting can never be too coarse, the wind too high; snow, hail, even driving rain, are welcome then. It is not only that with such combinations of the elements you get easier shots—you have them going down wind at a hundred miles an hour as well as strenuously beating up against it—but the birds do not hear the guns so well, and are not

driven off the beat as they would be on a quiet day. *Then* you may see them sitting in thousands on the water before you start, but very soon after being disturbed they get high up, and scatter over the face of half a county in search of shelter.

On this particular morning it was absolutely calm; there was not the slightest motion among the tall reeds or yellow grasses, not a ripple during the whole day on the water. Mr. Fraser, the courteous Resident in whose hands the invitations to shoot lie, laughed when I asked him why he did not wait for stormy weather before disturbing the Jheel; 'in that case,' he said, 'we might never shoot it at all, for it is nearly always calm here.' This placidness made stalking in Kashmir more difficult than it would otherwise be, for even seven or eight thousand feet up it was often hard to tell from what quarter the air was moving.

A number of very shallow narrow skiffs lay at the embarking place, with two slenderly clad natives in each; you had to balance yourself carefully on a low seat; then taking on board guns and cartridge magazine and lunch you were independent for the day. There were many skiffs for the drivers, and each gun had two to act as pick-ups; I think I counted over a hundred men on the bank before we started.

We were paddled out to our tubs; these hiding-places were about a quarter of a mile apart, sunk through the tough matting of weeds and roots into deep water and firmly fixed; they were beautifully and accurately made; you might have upset a canister of powder into mine and collected it all and not a grain the worse. Each tub had a moveable wooden seat in it; outside you could not move a yard and were a prisoner till an attending skiff came back; the tall reeds formed a natural screen. The man who goes to the furthest-out tub fires the first shot.

It is a very difficult thing to estimate numbers even approximately when looking at great masses of wild-fowl. Sometimes, long ago, while watching brent geese in the Cromarty Firth I used to occupy myself by making a rough count of them; on a stormy day they would sit in the shelter of the shore, though always well away from it, and I had plenty of time for the exercise, for seven or eight hours' waiting often only meant a long walk home in the dark with a clean gun. The days when the flocks of geese stretched in unbroken line for two or three miles had long passed, but they were there in great numbers. In the extreme north of Scotland and among the innumerable islands of the Outer Hebrides I have seen,



I suppose, some thousands of ducks together; at Hokra any attempt at computation would be an impertinence.

Thoreau in 'Walden' relates how an old wild-fowler, waiting for duck at Fairhaven Pond in the early spring, 'heard a low, seemingly very distant sound, singularly grand and impressive . . . gradually swelling . . . a sullen rush and roar, which seemed to him like the sound of a vast body of fowl coming in to settle.' The watcher seized his gun, but it was the ice breaking up, heaving and scattering its wrecks along the shore. I have heard this wild tumult on a great lake, and I think the old American's comparison was an accurate one. When the first shot was fired the birds rose with mighty thundering of wings, those far away almost simultaneously with those close in to the line of guns, and in a few moments the bulk of the fowl on many miles of marsh and water were on the wing. The horizon for a great distance and to a considerable height was so densely filled that for a little while it seemed to me that no sky at all was visible through the black multitude of birds. A photograph taken by my wife the first day showed a vast number, but this was only a picture of the outskirts of the crowd, after they had been for some little time on the wing. Some hundreds of geese got up also, but these looked after themselves as carefully as they do with us and gave very few chances; I never fired a cartridge at them.

It is fitting at such times that many duck should be seen, for the Hokra Jheel is one of the most famous shooting grounds for wild-fowl in the world; those who have travelled much and know it best make the higher claim for it. I believe that it would be difficult to show any place where the average yearly bag is larger, where bigger days have been known, and where a greater variety are killed—always taking into consideration the number of guns engaged—than on these Kashmir marshes; the figures I give will, I think, show this.

Now, if these natural jheels were in a well-watered country, if lakes and tarns lay about them as they do round shooting quarters in Scotland and Ireland, and the place was disturbed in such calm weather as I have described, the bag would be counted in scores instead of hundreds, probably in tens. The duck, after a few shots had been fired, would have got up far out of range and not have settled again till they had found friendly undisturbed waters three or four, or perhaps ten miles, away. If, on the other hand, this mighty host could be dealt with on such a day as a fowler loves,

with a seventy mile an hour wind and as much hail and snow as you could get, I know that the best totals, great as they are, would be enormously added to. If far over a thousand wild-fowl can be killed here on a perfectly calm sunny day, would it be unreasonable to expect three or four times as many in that other kind of weather, when no shot would be heard a hundred yards away, and the duck fly low as they always do fly in a gale? There would be one difficulty: a quite different build of boat would be required to cross the open water, for very little wind would sink the flimsy skiffs.

The first day I was sorely inconvenienced on my island by the presence of an uninvited native; I did not realise till the boat had gone that a 'useless mouth' had been added to my small garrison. The great wooden cover of the tub was his seat; he squatted on it as only a native can squat. A white man so placed, clad in only one very dirty garment, would have been an unlovely object, but this Kashmerian fitted in with his surroundings; his smooth brown limbs shone like copper in the sun, and he could prowl about nearly up to the hips on the treacherous surface of the islet without fear of catching cold. When standing up to peer through the rushes his legs might have belonged to some great stork, so thin and long and muscular they were. He manufactured for himself a serviceable pipe out of half a used cartridge and a hollow stem of grass, and begged a little tobacco for it. A quick safe loader would have been a great help to me, but this man was useless for such responsible work, could not indeed open a gun properly: he was a restless being, always twisting himself about, and if he sometimes called my attention to a duck coming from behind he often made me lose a fair chance by pointing out an impossible bird. I knew but one word of his language—'dur' ('high')—and he none of mine. I often wished this enthusiast at the bottom of the jheel, and got rid of him after lunch. I did not get a shot at duck on the water all day, nor was I ever able to give a cripple a second barrel owing to the height of the reeds.

The following figures may be of interest to wild fowlers. I missed the first day I was asked to shoot at Hokra; there is a two hundred mile drive from Rawal Pindi—the nearest railway station—to Srinagar, over a very high wild road, and I was twelve hours too late. On November 29 we were ten guns, and got 319 duck; this was considered a small bag for the time of year, but the birds were wild and very scarce after lunch. The second day,

a week later, we picked up 572 with eight guns. Mallard predominated, then teal; I counted the spoil of the first six guns to land; mallard were 156, teal 132, gadwall 49, and pochards of different kinds 33. During the four years—1910-13—a total of 28,023 wild-fowl were killed at Hokra, of which 10,820 were teal, 6445 mallard, 4715 pochard of several different kinds, 4273 gadwall; widgeon were scarce, only 246. There were also shot during this period, geese, 122, smew, Brahminy duck, blue-winged teal, shoveller, pintail, and stiff-tailed duck. An odd bustard and a few grebe and quail got into the bag, and a cormorant;—what was he doing so many hundreds of miles away from the sea? And what on earth was the curlew about which flew over our line the second day? He was a true *rara avis* here, and was missed by one of the best guns, who would gladly, I think, have given a goose for him.

The biggest bags for a day during these four years were 1127—the record; 1073 at a shoot for the Viceroy; 1009, 897, 778, 724, 718; the best numbers for individual guns were 227, 224, and a dozen from 189 to 103. The record for Hokra for any one gun for a day was in March 1911—304, of which 234 were teal; (I think that on this occasion the birds were shot over decoys; nothing like it could be done from a tub so late in the season.) October and early in November are the best months; after November the bulk of the fowl go south, and the bags drop to two or three hundred for the day. In 1910-11 7166 duck were killed in twenty-three days, giving an average of 311. I am indebted to Mr. Phelps, who had charge of this most interesting department of sport in Kashmir, for these particulars; he has had a long experience of Hokra and is a fine shot.

An English sportsman who has gone out to this country for many years is credited with the largest total for one day in open jheels with decoys: 13 geese, 105 mallard, 180 teal, 3 gadwall, 10 shoveller, 14 pintail—325 head, and on another day in that same year his pick-up was 245. I am afraid that these figures may be a little wearisome to the lay reader.

The long continued drought during the autumn and winter of 1913-14 caused great distress in India, and in some places famine. One of the natural results was the drying up of marshes and tanks, and therefore the entire loss of sport on them; many got so dry that the half-starved farmers were allowed to sow them down with corn. This was the case with a great preserve which I should otherwise have had the opportunity of visiting. Bhurtpore in

Rajputana is a famous duck shooting centre, but it is worked on an entirely different system to that in vogue in Kashmir; a very large number of guns are employed and a vast extent of country taken in, every water hole being occupied. Here in November 1912, at a shoot at which the Viceroy was present, 3511 duck were killed by fifty guns; thirteen of these had over a hundred birds each, and the top score was 250; the lowest I think six.

Good sport is a very relative term; during the previous season in Caithness, by dint of very hard work and much exposure to the elements, we accounted for 330 duck and a few geese, and thought we had done extremely well. Here on one calm day eight guns secured nearly 600, and the bag was an ordinary one for the time of year. It is fortunate that numbers alone do not make for happiness, or the long purse would give too great an advantage. I have always been amused by a very human little anecdote told by Mr. Stuart-Wortley in 'The Grouse.' As a boy he had been taking a 'laborious part in the slaying of from ten to twenty brace of partridges in the company of seven or eight old farmers in Oxfordshire.' When asked by them what he had been doing in the holidays he said 'grouse-driving.' 'This conveyed very little to them, but one of them lazily asked me what sort of a bag we had made.' Mr. Stuart-Wortley had been shooting in Yorkshire, with a result of from 150 to 170 brace a day. 'We had just finished lunch and our morning bag of  $7\frac{1}{2}$  brace of partridges and a hare was proudly laid out near us. But this reply of mine cast a gloom over everything, and one of these sandy-haired beefy-faced veterans laid his hand on my shoulder and said "Ah, young man, when you be older you'll know better than to tell such tales to a lot of men."'

The shooting was, I thought, difficult; after the first few minutes the duck came over high; there were many kinds, flying at every angle, and at different elevations and very different speeds according to their species; the air was exceedingly clear and the sun powerful, and this probably made them appear nearer to a stranger than they really were. I wasted many cartridges, and no doubt fired at some which were almost or perhaps quite out of shot. I was told that better men than I found the work puzzling at first and required practice before they settled down to their usual form.

There were snipe here, but it was early and we had little time to go after them. One day's snipe shooting in India will ever remain in my memory, both because of an incident in which I figured

as the principal performer, and from a wild tale of tragedy which I heard from one of the actors in it. It was in the marshes and among the jheels some twenty miles north of Peshawar, where the Cabul river begins to wind placidly among flat plains after its rough passage through the mountains.

Owing to the long drought some of the best places for snipe were dried up; dusty reed-beds and withered grass occupied their once fresh green hiding-places, and so to save time we rode from one little pool or marshy bit to another, sometimes for a mile or two across the ploughed land and parched rice fields. My horse behaved well enough in the morning, but after lunch he became troublesome and erratic in his movements, twisting aimlessly about and backing, and paying no attention to heels or switch or reins; a big ditch suddenly seemed to have an attraction for him and he made various attempts to get into it; I think he had either been stung by some insect or had lost what little mind he possessed. My companion, standing by, took hold of the front of the bridle which came loose in his hands: the creature jumped forward, and when I tightened the reins both of them broke close to the bit, and the whole rotten paraphernalia fell in a bundle off his head; then he started off as hard as he could gallop. The plains of India lay before us; I had little say as to whether we made for the Khyber or Lahore. The rice ground was as hard as any beaten road, intersected by many irrigating ditches, and I had no confidence in the stirrup-leathers. (A few weeks later, when coming back tired to camp after a long day's oorial stalking, those comfortable adjuncts to riding snapped three times in an hour.) I had an intense longing to have done with this horse, and I felt that it was a mere question of time before an extra big ditch or a bad swerve brought about the consummation. It was plain that the plough would be a better resting-place than the beaten ground, and so, after a few hundred yards of wild galloping, I chose my opportunity and slipped off, landing with an uncomfortable thud and a headache among the clods. I had been shooting snipe rather stupidly that morning, puzzled I think by a slower flight than we see at home, and giving them too much allowance, but after this episode I had a much better average, and so a little good came out of what might have been an evil, for I might easily have broken my neck. I watched with deep satisfaction the horse disappearing into the dusty haze in the direction of Calcutta, his owner toiling far behind, and I never set eyes on either of them

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again. This affair represented comedy to everyone save to the chief actor, but what I relate now was grimmest tragedy to all concerned.

My friend, Colonel Kennion, the Political Officer for the Malakand, and I had for our guide on the marshes an ancient man who went by the name of 'Huckabuck.' I am not sure if this was his rightful name, or whether I have spelt it correctly; he was probably well known to soldiers who shoot from Peshawar; I wish I could reproduce here a photograph I took of him; he was not at all unlike a snipe himself with his thin spindly brown legs, and long curiously shaped nose. He squatted down by us after lunch and told us the following tale, and we knew from other sources that it was a true one.

Some years before, Huckabuck had been acting as guide to a soldier and a civilian who had come out from Peshawar to try the same ground we were shooting over; when passing through one of the little hamlets which were dotted about on the plain a Pathan—with no warning or provocation—drew his knife, and ripped up and instantly killed one of the Englishmen; then seizing his gun he shot dead the other. A native, standing near, cried out in horror 'What are you doing to the Sahibs!' and the murderer at once turned on him and gave him also a fatal stab. Then Huckabuck, who was carrying one of the guns, fired and shot the Pathan in the legs so that he could not get away. No man knows when he is well off; very likely these two poor victims of a senseless crime were lamenting over a wetting or some missed birds just before they died. On this North-West Frontier it is the unexpected that oftenest happens; if immediate death is dealt out to a fanatic for killing a white man the reward is immediate entrance into Paradise and the temptation is a great one. We spent some months in the tribal country north of the Indian frontier, and there men carried revolvers at a picnic, and always had them ready to hand at night. And you could not go a mile walk without an armed guard.

The duck very soon began to understand the position of my blind, and swerve from it, and this was especially the case in the afternoon, when few birds flew over within shot. Small wonder that they became wary then. But wild-fowl have long memories. I used to shoot during the winter a chain of lakes in Donegal some four or five miles long; men were put in boats here and there to disturb settling birds, while I took shelter on a point: an ancient furze bush here, with a little building up, gave sufficient shelter.

Swans came over sometimes, and there were plenty of very cunning white-fronted geese, and a good many mallard and widgeon and teal. I only disturbed this beat in good—that is in stormy weather—and not oftener than three or four times during the winter. The keeper on this part of the ground told me afterwards that, long after the season was over and I had gone, he used to watch the duck on a wild day struggling to the west. Two or three hundred yards from the little gorse bush they always rose and passed high above it, far out of gunshot, and then completed a great curve by getting again down to the water, and the comparative shelter to be found there. Geese too can remember; we once had a shooting in the Outer Hebrides, and were told that in the previous autumn a man had—cruelly I thought—hidden some traps on the shore into one of which an old grey-lag gander had walked; he made the most dreadful commotion during the night, exhausting no doubt all anserine imprecations, and so effectually frightened his companions, many of whom haunted that wind-swept 'machar,' that they deserted it during the whole winter.

The natives were very clever in hunting a wounded bird, but if report did not lie, were sometimes tempted to keep some of those they had 'hal-laed' and so made lawful food, and much had to be left to their honesty, for it was impossible to keep an eye on them. I often thought of the last days I had been out after duck in the early part of that year in far-away Caithness. I had waited for some weeks for stormy weather to drive them on a good-sized loch, and when it came I sallied forth with two keepers to attack them. I do not know at how many miles an hour the wind blew during the two days the operation lasted, but it was as much as we could do to face it in the open country, encumbered as we were with heavy boots and every sort of garment; if it caught you when blown after rising a ridge it almost choked you. It was from the east or we could have done nothing; a west wind would have carried all dead or wounded birds down to the other end of the loch three miles away, and even in that wild water the gulls' eyes saw everything, and left us little that was worth taking home if it was not secured at once. By creeping in, and now and then getting a quiet shot, by waiting and watching and driving, we managed to secure forty-nine mallard and widgeon, and I went home rejoicing, all the better for the exposure, and feeling that we had done well with our opportunities. But at Hokra I knew I had thrown chances away and should have done more.

The charms of Kashmir are very great ; they appeal to the sportsman, to the artist, to the lover of grand, as well as of beautiful, scenery, and of flowers. A man caring for some of these things, with a little money and ample time at his disposal, could hardly have a fairer field to wander over. The country is healthy, living is not expensive, two friends—real friends who knew each other's ways—might well spend a year or two here, and look back upon the time as not the least happy in their lives. The licence to shoot does not cost much, and if the bag was not very large it would be a varied and very interesting one. Leaving out smaller game there are markhor and ibex and sheep, two kinds of bears, and two kinds of panthers, though the keenest and hardest toiler on the mountains will be fortunate if he ever comes into close contact with the beautiful snow-leopard. Then, nearer to civilisation, there is the Barasingh, the splendid Kashmir stag. Much camping out is necessary, a great deal of time has to be spent in tents ; the country is very wild and distances are great ; Leh is nineteen marches from Srinagar, Gilgit nearly as far ; from the latter you look up to, as near neighbours, some of the highest mountains in the world. The people are quiet and peaceful ; I can picture the old Political Officer, who had spent strenuous years on the frontier, coming to an anchorage here, laying aside his revolver, and forgetting after a time the sinister countenances of the Pathans he had lived amongst so long. The Kashmerians may have their own faults ; they have the reputation of being a somewhat cowardly race ; but I think I would rather spend my latter days among a people who were not all heroes than with their feud-loving blood-stained brethren in the west. You need not guard your guns and rifles so carefully here ; you may spend a night out watching a kill with a reasonable hope of not being shot at before the sun rises.

It is a far road to go from England ; the nearest railway stations leave the capital 200 miles to the east ; this means two days in a motor, for between Pindi and Murree you have to go over a ridge more than 7000 feet high, and then there is a great rise up the Jheelum. On the outward journey we had splendid weather, and enjoyed every bit of the way, but it was far otherwise going back. If there is any other hill up which a car can go where—for over twenty miles—there is not, so far as I could see, one single space of a dozen yards which is not climbing, I should be interested in hearing of it. From Kohala to Murree there is

not a break in the ascent. We returned in a dense foggy mist, and could not see a dozen yards in front for the greater part of the journey. The road was covered with frozen snow or ice, and it was only a kind protecting Providence and ample chains for the wheels that prevented a catastrophe. We found the Maharajah's rest-houses most comfortable; and we look back gratefully to the cleanness and quiet, and good wholesome food we met with in them, and the solemn helpful servants. Indian hotels were sometimes wanting a little in such essentials. But indeed it was not in hotels or rest-houses that we made our habitation in Kashmir, but in the charming bungalow of Major Wigram, the English soldier, who has charge of all the game in the State. With real hospitality he entertained us for three weeks, and I wish I could think he was as sorry to say 'goodbye' to us as we were to him, and to fascinating Billy, his snow-leopard cub. Everyone here was kind and helpful to us. The Maharajah reserves some wide stretches of country for himself or, rather, his friends; these preserves are called 'rukhs' and are very large. He courteously allowed me to shoot a Barasingh in one of these places, and he entertained us later on with great hospitality at Jammu, his winter capital.

GILFRID HARTLEY.

# A TWENTIETH-CENTURY PIRATE.

BY DOUGLAS WALSH.

'*The Better my Work, the Less my Pay . . .*'—CHU-CHIN-CHOW.

## I.

THERE is hate in this story. Likewise spite. Also ten years' impotent fury, chiefly resentment of overcharges and rage against inefficiency. The pen that writes it is dipped in gall. I am out for blood and mixed metaphors and revenge. Shamelessly I confess it, and at the same time trumpet a challenge. Can anyone convincingly and honestly deny the underlying truth of it? Have we not all suffered, are we not all suffering, shall we not always go on suffering from the Cyrils of the motor-repairing trade, master and man?

Yes, you've got me. It's a story about a motor-garage; and sure now of the sympathy of every reader who owns a car, I proceed.

As a story, I admit it's rotten. I don't like the end a bit. The end ought to go like this:

'With a smile and oil-stained fingers he presented his bill:	
'To removing sparking plug from cylinder, examining	
and testing same, cleaning, adjusting and polishing	
points, correcting gap, refitting to cylinder and con-	
necting with magneto . . . . .	
	£7 10 4
'Supplying and fixing one new copper washer to ditto . .	
	£2 10 1
	<hr/>
	£10 0 5

"Ten pounds for cleaning a sparking plug?" murmured the customer.

Cyril nodded cheerfully.

A spanner smote him on the temple—a nice, weighty spanner with sharp edges—and he died.

'Straight went his soul to the motorists' hell. There, on a muddy road in a biting wind, he lies on his back with an aching neck under a Ford that drips gear-oil into his eyes. And with a slipping wrench he screws at a nut with a stripped thread for twenty-four hours a day, eight days a week for ever—which the Sergeant-Major used to tell us are the army hours of labour.'

That, I say, ought to have been the end, but isn't.

Instead, the end is—but how about having the beginning first ?

His early years do not matter much. His father was gardener to a man on the Stock Exchange, who lived in a suburb about ten miles out. Cyril was educated at the Council School near his father's place. On leaving school he drifted naturally into assisting his father in the garden, and the chauffeur in the garage. When the war broke out, he was twenty-one and earning a pound a week. The chauffeur enlisted at once, and the stock-jobber laid up his car for the duration. But Cyril proclaimed to all and sundry his intention to wait until he was fetched. The stock-jobber's parlourmaid found a white feather in the chicken-run ; but Cyril stuck to his formula : ' If they want me, let 'em come and fetch me ! '

They did want him and they fetched him. But not for the infantry. Somehow his occupation had got entered on his papers as ' Chauffeur '—so they drafted him into the M.T. He presented himself at the dépôt at Grove Park, and was handed his khaki. Nobody expressed any surprise that a chauffeur could not drive. They taught him at the Government expense, and sent him to France as a light-car driver. Five shillings to a sergeant was a military investment highly to be recommended in those days to the seeker after ' cushy ' jobs.

The first General he upset in a ditch took a dislike to him. He was passed on to a Gunner-Colonel, who after three weeks of him gave him ten days F.P. No. 2 for being an hour late in picking him up at D.H.Q. A substitute had to drive the car while he was undergoing punishment, and on completion there was one M.T. driver surplus to establishment. The surplus driver—Cyril, not the substitute—was therefore sent back to Base. In the army it is only field-officers who are got rid of by promotion ; men become surplus to Army Form G. 1098, which lays down what every unit is entitled to in the way of men and stores.

Base transferred him to an M.T. Company and the M.T. Company put him on a heavy lorry as second driver. The first driver went sick, and as no reinforcements were available, Cyril had to drive and look after the lorry. For forgetting to put any oil in the crank-case, he was stopped fourteen days' pay and sent to the cookhouse, where he stayed till the Armistice. Three weeks later he was demobilised on ' compassionate grounds '—whether personal or to the Company is beside the point. All that matters is that his old, widowed gardener-father had had an apoplectic stroke and died two days after his only son had obtained his release.

The stock-jobber—good man!—promptly offered his father's place to the man who had done his bit . . . when fetched.

'No, thank you, sir,' said Cyril, who always had plenty to say for himself, which was why he didn't think much of the Army. Sergeants-major are jealous folk. They dislike talkers. Especially Cyril's kind—the kind that carry K.R. in their kit-bags and say they won't be sworn at.

'No, thank you, sir,' he said. 'I'm going to start in business for myself on father's savings. It's the M.T. who really won this war. If it hadn't been for us we'd never have licked 'em, sir! Infantry's no good without the M.T., and while I've been in the M.T. I've learned a thing or two about cars, sir.'

'I suppose you had a pretty rough time?' murmured the Stock-jobber.

'Orful, sir, simply orful. The roads was like nothink on earth. Cut up somethink terrible. Shell-holes everywhere, and of course we was under fire a goodish bit. It ain't no joke driving a lorry through the mud and bumping in and out of shell-holes in the dark, never knowing whether the next one will bust right on top of you. I tell you, I'm glad to be back safe, sir; and as my old dad's left a tidy bit behind him, I'm thinking of starting a garridge. If at any time you want anythink done, I'd be only too pleased to give it personal attention and charges most reasonable, because of the kindness you've always shown to me and father, sir.'

'Right-o!' said the Stock-jobber breezily. 'Good luck!'

And he got another discharged soldier to look after his garden.

Cyril rented a big shed-like structure that had once been a small skating-rink, and was not yet rebuilt into a cinema. It had been a billet during most of the war, and he got it cheap because it was falling to pieces. He had the word 'Garage' painted on it in big white letters, made a few alterations, such as providing an inspection-pit and partitioning off a portion for an office; and laid in a small stock of motorists' sundries. He also arranged with a paternal government, then in the first flush of enthusiasm to assist the demobilised, for a supply of petrol and oil and the purchase of a lathe and some tools, these things still being under control. The engagement of a mechanic and a boy, and the purchase of a long yellow linen dust-coat for himself, completed the matter.

He was now a full-blown garage proprietor. Curly-haired, twenty-six, blue-eyed and talkative, clad in that long yellow coat,



his finger-nails blue with grime, he smiled at the world with the conscious air of the man who has just started in business for himself. Though fairly sure of his aitches, there was at times a touch of Mrs. Malaprop about his fluency. 'Part and partial' was a favourite expression of his. He called a chassis a chashiss. He thought there was only one 'c' in accumulator, and was hopelessly fogged by acetylene. But he knew quite well how he intended his bread to be buttered—both sides and all round the edges.

A clever little chap in his way—sharp as a needle and about as slim—the sort one can't help having a sneaking admiration for—between curses—though one wouldn't care to live with him . . . An amusing and at the same time irritating beggar—a twentieth-century pirate, that's what he was, confound him; and everybody likes a buccaneer, though nobody ought to.

His luck was in. It generally is with that sort. He had spotted the tide in the affairs of men all right. The people who had laid up their cars were bursting to have them on the road again; the 'airers' of wounded soldiers were dreaming of jaunts without hospital blue; those who had sold their cars on joining up were calling themselves names and looking for others; and everyone who had made money and had never had a car before was itching to buy one now the war was over. And having 'done his bit,' Cyril in his long yellow dust-coat was standing in the doorway of that ex-skating rink, rubbing his hands, ready to give inexperienced advice upon, and inefficient attention to, any internal combustion engine that came along.

## II.

Motoring, both as a pleasure and a trade, is a queer business. Nothing is quite so fascinating to the occupants as a car that is going well on a fine day—or quite so irritating to the people who are not in it. Nor is there anything that seems to be so dashed funny to everyone but the driver and passengers as a car that has broken down. For perennial freshness this jest is a serious rival to the mother-in-law of the music-hall.

In all our commercial life there is nothing quite the same as the motor, or the way the motorist is exploited, especially the pleasure variety. The chief reason for this, of course, is the fact that a car is a complicated piece of mechanism, full of traps even for the expert. In many ways motor-repairing is very like doctoring. The same symptoms are produced by different causes. Diagnosis is

often a matter of genius or luck. The G.P.'s difficulty in distinguishing between the early stages of scarlet fever and diphtheria is as nothing to the snares that a car can lay for the cleverest.

There are, for instance, 'knocks.' Knocks are as varied as human ailments and often as hard to trace to their source. The carbon knock, the ignition knock, and the bearing knock are fairly simple propositions. But there are others, springing from obscure causes and occurring in unexpected places; and though in theory the expert should be able to distinguish all knocks by their note, in practice he can do nothing of the sort. Even when, like the doctor again, he has located them with a stethoscope, he cannot always define the cause. 'Exploring' operations are as frequent in motor-repairing as in surgery. And just as many a healthy appendix has been removed without any official alteration of the diagnosis (or the bill), so many an engine is taken down . . . and reassembled.

This being the state of the market, it is easy to imagine what a glorious field is open to gentlemen like our friend Cyril.

As a matter of fact, there is a puzzling knock in my car, which I have secretly located as in the oil-pump. It is the sort of knock that might be anything, and some day, though it gets no worse, I shall have to have it seen to. But at present it affords me a good deal of quiet amusement. When bored with waiting for my wife on shopping expeditions, I drop into the nearest garage and invite an opinion on my knock. Three Cyrils have diagnosed it as big-end trouble; one has declared it to be a loose gudgeon-pin, and another is positive that it is only carbon deposit. All have offered to 'take my cylinders down,' and assured me that it is unsafe to continue to drive the car. If I like to bring it in next Thursday now . . . but I don't like. What Cyril himself said about it comes later.

Having put out his sign, the work rolled in; and the worse he did it, the more he got. That is the charm of motor-repairing. One of the very first customers who called upon him came with a simple puncture, a mere matter of removing the inner tube, putting back the customer's own spare, and vulcanising the damaged tube at leisure.

Bill, the mechanic, was at dinner. I want to be scrupulously fair. The mechanics are not always at dinner or out 'testing' when one wants an urgent job done. Sometimes they are at tea.

Cyril, in response to fevered entreaties, did the job himself.

It was an old car, and Cyril removed the Stepney-wheel, which he called 'the Stephney' as most of his kidney do, though I don't know why. Then he changed the tubes, pumped up, and the customer departed, very much obliged.

Twenty minutes later he came back with a purple face and 'the Stephney' on the rim once more.

'Confound you, you nipped that tube!' he cried. 'Good Heavers, I'm fed-up with the incompetence of you garage-people. You're all alike—not one of you can be trusted to do the simplest job properly.'

Did the latest recruit to the trade blush for shame? Did he meekly apologise and beg to be allowed the privilege of presenting his customer with a new tube to replace the one that had blown itself to tatters through his inefficiency?

Not he. The tailor who messes up your coat will cut you another; the grocer who has supplied a bad new-laid egg will change it for a fresher one; but the motor-repairing industry has a way of its own.

'That's not a nip, sir,' said Cyril calmly. 'No nip would go off like that. This cover's crept—that's what it's done, crept! I always did say when they stopped using security bolts and put in those bolt-valves instead, there'd be trouble! Give me security bolts every time. More trouble, I admit, but they make the tube and the cover part and partial of one another, so to speak. There's no creeping with them!'

The customer mopped his heated brow.

'None of my tyres have ever crept before!' he said offensively.

'Course not, sir,' Cyril agreed. 'Not when those bolt-valves was new. But as they get older they lose spring—don't hold enough to stop the cover creeping. . . You'll have a new tube, I suppose, sir?'

'I suppose so,' growled the customer.

'Thank you, sir. Hi! Bill—slip a new tube in this cover quick!' Bill had got back from dinner. 'If you'll look in some time to-night or first thing in the morning I'll have the other one all ready vulcanised for you. Nice to see the cars on the road again, isn't it, sir? Should you be wanting anythink at any time we shall be only too pleased to see what we can do for you, sir. I've only opened this place since I came back from France.'

It's a fine trade, my masters—the only business in the world where mistakes really pay. The bigger the mistake, the bigger the bill.

Helpless, dissatisfied, impoverished and delayed, the customer drove off . . . leaving sixpence in Bill's grimy palm.

Cyril lit a cigarette and ordered another inner tube of the size of the one he had just sold.

They were already what he called 'bunged-up' with jobs of all descriptions, and Cyril, the mechanic and the boy, were scamping them as fast as they could go. Nuts and bolts, difficult to get at, were, if not too vital or too prominent, left out altogether or only finger-tightened. Nobody would ever be able to prove that they had not worked loose or dropped off on the road. Why worry and waste precious time and bark one's knuckles when the cleverest engineer on earth couldn't prove you a liar once the car was driven out of the shop?

But perhaps that is hardly fair. This kind of thing is not so much deliberate swindling as mere shirking—avoiding troublesome tasks. Human hands are soft and the stuff that cars are made of is hard, with sharp edges, and plenty of grease about to make spanners slip. To lie on one's back under a car or to stand in a pit and work upwards with an aching neck, or to bend forwards till the head swims, and with tired, bruised fingers to wrestle with a nut on which one can get only a tenth of a turn at a time is a job that is a severe strain on human frailty when shirking is so safe. The makers seem to delight in putting nuts and bolts in places where it needs the patience of a Job and the delicacy of a pick-pocket to wed one with the other. Memories, too, are unreliable things in a rush-time. One may honestly mean to go back, when assistance is available, and have another go at some refractory bolt that requires another hand to prevent the head from turning, and simply forget all about it. . . . But the complete job is charged for in the bill. One never forgets to do that. . . .

Cyril was wrestling with the holding-down bolts of a radiator and swearing hard because it was so difficult to get at them, when a car pulled up outside.

He straightened his aching back—do pity him, poor dear, for his aching back; and pity Bill, too, for the crick in his neck as he lay under another vehicle working his wicked will on its cardan shaft—Cyril straightened his back, I say, and went out beaming. There was nothing he approved of quite so much as lady drivers. They all but made up for the war and his experiences in the army with that blighter of a Sergeant-Major. Lady drivers, you see, were gold-mines—sheer nuggets, bless 'em.

'I wonder if you could tell me what's the matter with my car,'

said this one sweetly. 'It's taken to knocking on the slightest rise.'

The buccaneer shifted his quid—I mean, Cyril hastily washed his hands in petrol.

'It's taken to backfiring, too, every time I try to start,' observed the lady, watching him.

'Oh, that's nothing. You don't shove the ignition lever back far enough,' said the expert.

He opened the lady's throttle and let her engine roar.

'Perhaps you'd like to try it on the road,' she said, deafened by the noise.

Cyril shook his head. He was satisfied.

'One of your big-ends is gone, miss,' he said, with all the authority of a gardener's son and an M.T. cook.

The lady looked as if a specialist had just sentenced her to death.

'I've always been most careful to use plenty of oil,' she murmured defensively—and the cloud of blue smoke pouring out behind supported her.

'Tisn't your fault, miss,' said Cyril generously. 'They will go!'

He 'shorted' the sparking plugs with a screw-driver one after the other.

'Number three,' he pronounced. 'But I expect they'll all want seeing to. They usually do when one goes.'

The lady thought what nice curly hair he had, also what sweet blue eyes, and that she rather liked the patch of oil on his cheek—though she was a real lady, mind you, with no nonsense about her and a husband just demobilised. But they're like that, the dears.

'How long will it take?' she asked anxiously.

'Couldn't do it under a fortnight, miss!'

'Oh, I must have it sooner than that—I really must!'

'I'm sorry, but you see I'm bunged right up!'

The lady said then what everybody, whatever their sex, always says in such circumstances.

'Oh, but surely you could put some other job aside to get mine done?' she pleaded. 'I do really want the car for the weekend. If I could have it by Saturday I should be tremendously obliged!'

'All right, miss. I'll do it, and you can trust me to make a good job of it,' he promised, for she was a very winning lady, and pirates were ever a susceptible race.

So Bill was called from the universal joint on that cardan shaft, and very glad he was to leave it. And he and Cyril together

removed the lady's radiator, took down her cylinders, and filled a box with the pieces.

The big-ends were in perfect order. So were the gudgeon-pins. There was nothing wrong with the engine—nothing at all.

So they put everything back again, and Bill spotted the real cause of the trouble when he tried to start up. The engine backfired. He put the ignition lever right back, and still she backfired.

'The blamed thing's come adrift while it was advanced and stopped there,' he cried.

Cyril nodded sapiently.

'With the spark always fully advanced, of course she'd knock on a rise!' he said, looking as Newton must have looked when the apple fell.

Five minutes work and one split-pin put everything right.

When the lady called on Saturday, she was delighted to find her car ready.

'We've made a good job of your big-ends, miss,' said Cyril. 'And cleaned the cylinder heads and ground in your valves at the same time.'

She looked at the bill—eight pounds ten.

'It's rather more than I expected it would be,' she murmured.

'Ah, but look at the price of labour—look how everything is up!' he protested. 'I assure you I'm making next to nothing out of the job, miss, and had to keep my men on overtime to get it done in time. But I promised, and when I promise I like to keep to it. . . . Oh—we noticed your ignition lever wasn't working properly and repaired that for you, too, free of charge, in with the other job. I don't think you'll find she'll backfire any more if you keep it well retarded.'

'What a nice man,' thought the lady as she paid. 'And it's quite true what he said—everything is very dear.'

### III.

It was a great game, but the pity of it was that he didn't play it as a game, and so lost a lot of quiet, profitable amusement. He took it dead seriously. They all do.

If you had called him a liar, a swindler, an extortioner, and a blundering fool, he would have opened his blue eyes in amazement and recommended you to attend Mr. Pussyfoot's meetings.

Take that lady who had admired his nice curly hair and oily cheek, for instance. It is all a question of point of view. Mine—



my pen being, as I warned you, dipped in gall—is that he charged her £8 10s. for a split-pin. His is: (1) that he found out what was wrong and put it right; (2) that work done must be paid for by somebody; (3) that he did take her engine down and did (unnecessarily) decarbonise it and grind-in the valves and make a good job of the big-ends when he put them back again; and (4) that you can't say even now that it was *only* the ignition, that a big-end probably was working loose, and that now they are all as tight as a drum. So how on earth anybody can have a grievance against him or think he made a mistake fairly beats him. Anyway, if they don't like it, let them go somewhere else. He has plenty of work and only took the job on as a favour. That is what he would say—and we had better leave it at that.

He got on. There was no ten-mile speed limit to his progress. Here and there an offended customer went elsewhere and fared no better. But mostly they paid, and came back and paid again. One has to. Your cook can weigh the butcher's joint and check it against the ticket; she can sniff at the fish and send it back if it isn't to her liking; and you can count the sacks of coal as the vanmen heave them into your cellar. But neither you nor your chauffeur can weigh, smell or count a motor-car.

Although he had only started in December 1918, so well had he chosen the time that early in the New Year he was compelled to add two 'improvers' and a lady book-keeper to his staff.

By the middle of February he had also engaged a coach-painter, and his mind was about equally divided between second-hand cars and the book-keeper.

That parlourmaid, who had no business to go into the chicken-run at all, couldn't hold a candle to Miss James, the book-keeper. Of course she had left the stock-jobber ages ago to make munitions, but Cyril still remembered her occasionally, the interfering, silly little hussy. He had always been ready to do his bit; nobody could call *him* one of the shirkers. What he'd said all the time was 'If they want me, let 'em come and fetch me!' . . . Fancy comparing a snappy cat like her with Miss James! Good job she'd said she wouldn't go to the pictures with him again! Jolly good riddance to bad rubbish. . . .

March saw the public mad after anything that could be called a motor-car, and Cyril equally mad after Miss James.

She was twenty-two, plump, with dark brown hair, brown eyes and not unpleasing features—a thoroughly nice girl, conscientiously keen on her work and her employer. She could keep a customer's



can account without getting into a muddle even when some tins were 2s. and some 3s. She knew exactly how many beans make five, and how many c's there are in accumulator.

Cyril kissed her on the 5th of March, the day on which the first two second-hand cars he speculated in were pushed out of the paint-shop glittering with a coat of new enamel.

Miss James gave notice on the spot.

He glanced through the windows of the office partition, and his eyes rested sadly upon those repainted vehicles which he had bought for a hundred pounds apiece, and done up at the net cost of eleven pounds the two.

'Oh, I say!' he protested. 'Here, don't take it like that!'

Then he dried up, for once at a loss, and the colour slowly mounted into his cheeks.

Ellen repeated her notice. She did not put on her hat and stalk out. With quiet dignity she re-asserted her intention to leave that day week.

Cyril, by now scarlet all over, looked at her helplessly.

'What else can you expect?' she enquired. 'After forgetting yourself like that. . . No nice girl could possibly stay.'

'You looked so tempting sitting there,' he sighed. 'And your hair tickled me when I leant down to see that account you were typing. I say—don't go! Really, I couldn't help it, and the last thing I wanted was to offend you. For a long time now I've been thinking. . . Half a mo.!' He broke off, for a gentleman had entered the shop.

He hurried out to him, and Miss James took a little looking-glass out of her attaché case and patted at her hair.

It was half an hour before he came back.

'I've sold one of those cars,' he announced excitedly. 'Three fifty. You might make out the bill, Miss James. He's waiting for his receipt.'

'What year shall I put?' she asked in her most business-like tone.

'None,' he answered firmly. 'Just:

'To second-hand Marvel Car with spare wheel, tool-kit, tail, side and head lamps complete . . .	£350	0	0
'Registration . . . . .	1	0	0
'Number Plates . . . . .	1	10	0
'Insurance . . . . .	9	5	0
	£361	15	0

'That's the lot.'

The customer had been informed that it was a 1914 car, but Cyril had no intention of putting that in writing.

Miss James laid down the pencil with which she had taken down these particulars in shorthand, and turned to her typewriter.

'He knows a friend who'll probably buy the other one,' smiled her employer confidentially while she worked. 'I'm going to ask four hundred for it. The public's fair balmy for any old sort of car. They'll buy anything, especially with a coat of paint on it. Dying to spend their money, they are. Motoring's going to be all the rage. Going to buy cars for all I'm worth, I am.' And he drew in his breath with an excited gasp . . . seeing visions, picturing himself making a pot of money, admiring himself for the bold way he had plunged and the even bolder plans formulating themselves beneath that curly hair.

'The bill, sir,' said Miss James severely, as she handed it to him. To her mind even the fact that he had brought off his first big deal was no excuse for his not thinking of—something else.

He stamped and receipted it, and then hurried out again.

'Guess *he'll* soon be back!' remarked Bill, richer by five bob, as the customer drove off in his new purchase. 'And that not under his own power, neither, but towed . . .'

Cyril frowned. Business was business—a sacred matter, not to be jested about.

'Pers'n'ly, I don't care if he takes his repairs somewhere else,' he said loftily. 'I've no patience with them profiteers! Stopped at home and made money, they did, while we was out doing our bit. There's nothink wrong with that car, Bill—nothink worth mentioning.'

'No,' grinned Bill, who had twice his master's humour. 'There's nothink wrong, and yet everythink's wrong, as you might say. That's the sort of cup of tea it is. Oh, they'll learn a few things about motoring this summer, some of 'em will!'

He whistled cheerily as he returned to his task of tuning up the other car for the next victim, and Cyril went back to his bookkeeper.

She looked at him steadily as he came into the office, and once more he reddened.

'Let's see, where were we?' he exclaimed, with a transparent pretence of being at his ease. 'Oh yes . . . what I was going to say when that bloke came in was that I love you, Miss James!'

That's why I did it—that's why I couldn't help it. 'Cos I'm always thinking of you, you see, and when your hair tickled me, I just had to! I suppose it was the war and all we went through at the front that's made me want to settle down and get married. Time and again out there, when I never knew whether next minute I wouldn't be blown to Kingdom Come I used to dream of warm, cosy evenings by the fire with a girl like you. And you hadn't been working for me a week before I thought to meself: "Here she is—the sort of girl I dreamed about out there in that draughty old cookhouse. . . ."

He paused, disconcerted by the slip emotion had betrayed him into.

But Ellen did not appear to have noticed anything.

With shining eyes she looked at his curly hair.

'Oh, Cyril!' she breathed.

He took her in his arms, and she was still there when Bill burst open the door and thrust his head into the office.

'You're wanted,' he said, tactfully, like the gentleman he was, hiding his astonishment. 'Someone after that other car. Talk about going like hot cakes. . . .' And with that he retreated.

'Crikey,' he thought to himself with a grin on his greasy face, as he waited to be called on to take the new customer for a trial run and earn another five bob, 'I'd never have thought she'd got it in her. Looked as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth, she did! Shows 'ow true it is with a bit of skirt that you never *can* tell!'

#### IV.

They were married early in April.

Ellen disapproved of long engagements. If two people knew their own minds, she said, she didn't see what they had to wait for. And what Ellen said, went.

In the interval Cyril, besides carrying on with the ordinary business of a garage, had bought and resold two more cars. And Ellen made a joke.

'There's one thing, you'll be able to help me with the cooking, won't you, dear?' she smiled.

Cyril looked rather confused. So she had heard and understood, had she?

He forced a laugh.

'Rather!' he grinned. 'I'm hot stuff at peeling taties, I can tell you!'

And then—for me—she went and spoilt it.

'Someone had to peel them, hadn't they, darling?' she murmured comfortingly.

But there were no flies on Ellen.

Another time she asked him straight out how long altogether he was in the Army?

He told her, and from that day ceased to spin her 'cuffers' about his experiences at the front—which was what the minx desired. It interfered with the real business of life—spooning and choosing furniture.

If it were not that she really loved him, I should confess that I like Ellen. But that mars her for me. The more I think about it the rottener I feel this story is. He ought to have fallen into the clutches of a hair-comber. A chap like that has no right to love and be loved by such a really nice sensible girl as Ellen. . . But there it is.

They set out for their honeymoon in a two-seater that he had picked up cheap, leaving Bill to carry on while they were away.

By all the canons of poetic justice that car ought to have developed a habit of breaking down in out-of-the-way spots, and Cyril ought to have been victimised in strange garages as he victimises you and me. But poetic justice belongs to poesy and not to real life. The dashed thing went perfectly well all the time.

It was a queer honeymoon in one way—unique as far as I know, in that the affectionate couple combined business with pleasure. They toured the country seeking cars for sale in places off the beaten track.

Dozens of other dealers, many of the mushroom variety, who had never touched a car till this wonderful boom, were doing the same thing; but they were not on their honeymoons. With the summer coming on and the war over and no new cars to be had, the second-hand car market was in a ferment. The man who had sold a good car when he joined up and couldn't wait a lifetime for a new one now he was demobilised; the much-abused profiteer; the young officer with his gratuity to get rid off; everybody with money to burn was crying out for cars now that restrictions were removed. Prices were soaring to ridiculous heights. Presently—in a year or so—they would come tumbling down; but meanwhile Cyril and his tribe saw no reason why they should not make hay in the sunshine.

While that wave of extravagance and pleasure was sweeping the country and swamping the cries of the thoughtful for economy, anything that would run would sell for an absurd figure, provided that it had a new coat of paint on the body-work. People simply tumbled over each other in their eagerness. There was no hesitation—no murmurs about thinking it over and calling again. A roll of notes was taken out of a pocket-book or a cheque cashed after a brief trial run that told the purchaser next to nothing. What would come later was no concern of the Cyrils. A five- to seven-year-old car is a five- to seven-year-old car. Nothing lasts for ever. No machinery but ages and needs renewing.

Practically every car was '1914' and had been 'laid up during the war.' Expert examination was always invited—because the things the expert could spot, such as play in the steering wheel or the universal joints, were easily attended to. Could the expert see into the heart of the steel, where age and use in cars, as well as in men, tell most?

'Coping' and 'remodelling' were the order of the day. Worn speeds in the gear-boxes were renewed, and sawdust mixed with the lubricant to quieten the gears. Parts were taken from ancient horrors that had rusted 'at the back' for years; back-axles were tinkered with; screens were cut down, upholstery was refurnished, and bodies brought up to date. If here and there a customer knew too much or an expert condemned, it didn't matter. Next minute a purchaser came along—a simple soul with money in the bank or in his pocket who didn't know that a horse-coper is a village idiot to a second-hand car dealer.

And naturally Cyril didn't see why he shouldn't have his pickings as well as the other chaps, or why love need interfere with business.

It didn't. The honeymoon was as happy as it was profitable. Luckier than most of the dealers then scouring the country and advertising in all the papers, they picked up ten cars, and Cyril sent them all home to be tuned up and repainted. He sold them on his return at a profit of at least two hundred per cent. To 'pull it off' he had to make his first excursion into the realms of finance. Besides investing all his profits to date, he obtained an overdraft from the bank and borrowed Ellen's savings. But all his debts were paid and all the cars sold before May was out, and his balance at the bank was then four thousand, one hundred and two pounds nine and eightpence.

I wish I could depict him as coming back to domestic trouble

just to even things up a bit. But I can't. Ellen—confound her—loved him more than ever, and made him a good, careful wife. The only fly in their ointment was that they couldn't get a servant, and he minded that much more than she did. He wanted a domestic (or two) to show the world how well he was getting on. Nothing would have pleased him better than to engage that parlourmaid who had trespassed in the chicken-run. But she, discharged from munitions, was happily drawing her unemployment money and in no hurry for a place. The new rules were not then in force.

Ellen, however, was quite happy. She liked doing her own work . . . actually, she enjoyed cooking and cleaning—for him. Bill was right. Skirts are queer cattle.

By August the second-hand car market was practically dead, for the simple reason that all the available cars had changed hands. But even though new cars were only coming along in dribbles, Cyril's business was by no means at a standstill. He had so many repairs and so many overhauls to tackle that he was forced to install more machinery and further increase his staff, Bill blossoming out as Works Manager. The cars they had sold and the cars other men had sold played a never-ending game of 'In' and 'Out.' For each dissatisfied customer who left him and went to his rivals, another dissatisfied customer left his rivals and came to him. The motor-repairing industry is largely supported by the washing of each other's dirty linen.

He gave up saying 'part and partial' after a correction from Ellen. He gave up doing any work himself except interviewing customers and pricing their jobs. Technical terms were always on his lips, often misapplied. Words flowed from him in an oily stream that drowned the knowledge of proper engineers and dumfounded the ordinary owner-driver. He always knew what was the matter and he could always put it right. And when it turned out to be something else, and he *hadn't* put it right—well, wasn't that what he said when you brought your car in? And what could you expect with the men he was forced to employ and be thankful to get, with everythink still up like it was? . . . Even Ellen couldn't cure him of saying 'everythink.'

Then came the railway strike, and he did very well out of it, though it disappointed him sadly. It didn't last long enough. Taking City men to business at 10s. a head return, forty to the lorry and two double journeys a day, he thought both sides showed a contemptible weakness in compromising after a paltry nine days out.



And so everything played into his hands, and his bank balance went on soaring. And I am sure you will see now why I don't like the way this story ends. He wasn't found out. You can't find him out. Or if you do and go somewhere else you are no better off. There he is, happy and prosperous, with an ever-growing business and a nice wife and a servant now, for Ellen is expecting. . . . And there I've got to leave him, with that knock in my oil-pump.

Oh, I don't know. I may as well have it seen to, and he's no worse than anybody else.

He says it is the clutch-bearing. I know it isn't and I've given him all sorts of reasons, but he only says they prove that he's right and I'm wrong. The best thing will be for me to let him take the clutch down, he says. It really isn't safe to drive any longer.

He was very nice and polite, but I could see that he thought me a conceited, ignorant Mr. Know-All. And—hang it!—he made me wonder if perhaps . . . well, he's taking the clutch down.

He has just rung me up.

It is the clutch-bearing, he says. But he finds on further examination that my engine is in very bad condition. He's taken that down too, as I said he was to make a job of it. (Did I?) One of my cylinders is badly scored. He can't, of course, do anything to that. But I ought to have new piston-rings, and the big-ends want tightening up a bit. The oil-pump, too, needs a little adjustment. Would I like to come round and have a look?

No, I wouldn't. What's the good? I know perfectly well that what he means is that it *isn't* the clutch-bearing, and he has taken down the engine and found that it *is* the oil-pump! Of course I want new piston-rings—one always does. Of course he can make out that the big-ends need adjusting now he's taken them apart. . . . Oh, confound him—let him get on with the job and let me have my 'bus back!

Another fifteen pounds up my shirt.

Yes, it's a ripping game. Beats golf and dairy-farming hollow, even with milk at a shilling a quart.



### THE READER'S EYE.

THE cyphers which we use to convey our meaning visually to one another have not yet become quite as lifeless as mathematical symbols; they still bear a few lingering traces of the old picture-writing days, when only great artists could write legibly. There were such days; though we can scarcely conceive it possible in an age when people of every sort can and do write legibly and, alas, copiously.

In considering, however, the effect on the mind and emotions of the actual appearance of words on the printed page, I shall not pretend to trace the cause to the evolution of letters from pictures. I shall not, in fact, trouble myself about causes at all beyond saying that habitual association is probably one of them and that of others, if there be any, I have no idea. All that I want is to tell something of the effect I have observed them to have on my own mind and emotions, in case those who have had similar feelings should be interested in mine.

Now there are three ways of enjoying poetry: it can be read, heard, or thought (i.e. when known by heart), and I find the experience is different in each case. By reading a poem (if it is already fairly familiar to me) I find that I get the fullest perception of its beauty and the keenest enjoyment from it. Hearing it read well by a good voice I am immediately affected by the music of its sounds and by a desire to read it again to myself; but I feel a sad loss in not seeing the printed page before me. Thinking poetry, except single short stanzas or lines, is spoilt by the effort—be it never so slight—of memory, and sometimes also by too great familiarity. Yet this comes nearer in enjoyment to reading than to hearing, which I believe is because it is accompanied by a visual image of the printed lines of the poem. Evidently then a sight of the printed words and lines is indispensable to the purest appreciation of poetry. The best poetry is gloriously musical—but it is not music. Poetry

‘Pipes to the spirit ditties of no tone,’

and to read it aloud is to interpret the ‘unheard melody’ to our ears on an imperfect instrument, which must distract our attention. To print it is to convey its essence to the mind more directly and with less distraction; for we can at once take in

through our eyes every detail of a large and varied scene, and this even if the mind is busy with other things at the same time ; but sounds we can only take one by one, and they are apt to engross our whole attention. Thus the eye can take in the *form* of a whole line instantaneously, while the ear, receiving the sound syllable by syllable and the sense word by word, must wait till the end of the line before it can go back to consider it as a whole ; and stopping to do this it will lose half the next line.

It is a wicked and clumsy crime to rush in and attempt to dissect a fine poem, but I must give one or two examples to show my meaning. Take two lines from 'L'Allegro' :

'Or sweetest Shakespear Fancie's childe  
Warble his native Wood-notes wilde.'

The full effect—the full *poetry* of the beautiful alliteration can only be attained by reading the words. The eyes instantaneously feed the mind with the meaning of the lines, and at the same time half subconsciously catch the reiterated W-N-W-N-W with which they feed the ear—that non-sensual ear which Keats knew all about. Hearing these lines spoken we can enjoy their *music* with the sensual ear, but it is only by reading that we can enjoy the full poetry of them, and there is all the difference in the world between the two, even though they spring from the same causes and the first always accompanies the second. Examples come crowding to the mind in hundreds—lines I can never think of without seeing the printed words in the mind's eye as clearly as I see the vision these words call up :

'Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways'

Or

'The blue Mediterranean where he lay  
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams.'

Look at the 'l's' in that second line and enjoy them with the inward ear.

Or

'Freshen thy flowers as in former years  
With dew, or listen with enchanted ears  
From the dark dingles to the nightingales.'

The softness of a warm spring night in the woods seems to rise up out of the last line as you look at it.

Yes, the eye is a far subtler and more sensitive interpreter than the ear, and the imagination responds to it far more

instantaneously. The fact is noticeable even in separate words without a context. Such a word for instance as 'terrible' is far more terrible to read than to hear:—**TERRIBLE**!—it lies there on the page like the frown of a vengeful god. **TERROR** has a very different appearance to my eyes, but not less distinct; and so inseparable is my idea of the word from its appearance that I can rarely read the word 'error' without a half-glimpsed vision of wildly staring eyes starting from a motionless head being momentarily called up, to be instantaneously dismissed by the brain.

If the appearance of words normally spelt and printed has all this effect upon us, what is likely to be the effect of the abnormal? Such for instance as italics, which can do so much more than merely emphasise; for think of the difference between reading a startling sentence in italics (*say in a ghost story*) and reading the same sentence merely underlined. When a man, of whom it is suspected that he has been murdered, is described as having 'died,' how can any modulation of the voice express the stealthy subtlety of those inverted commas? Do you not experience a certain curious and indescribable Feeling at suddenly encountering an unexpected capital? FitzGerald knew their mysterious hushed effect, when he sprinkled them rather lavishly over his famous translation, giving it a peculiarity not entirely unnoticed by his small army of parodists; and, to return to the supernatural, nearly everybody must in his youth have felt an unpleasant jerk of the heart on reading such sentences as: 'Slowly the Thing was coming nearer in the darkness'! or: 'He awoke with a start and instantly became aware that Something was present in the room with him.'

We read the literature of a period to understand its characteristic thought and outlook, but those earlier periods of English History when literature, thought, and outlook were all strictly limited—we sometimes seem to do more than understand them—we feel the very atmosphere of an age in its spelling. At least I have found it so; possibly I have merely deluded myself with a new kind of pathetic fallacy. The other day in a modern book I suddenly came across one line quoted from Chaucer standing by itself in the middle of the page. It was:

'Hit bifel upon a day.'

That one line there, surrounded by words written 600 years later, seemed like the faintly-heard refrain of a song far away.

It produced in me a sensation akin to a lump in the throat; and yet I know quite well that it was all because of that initial H. The addition of that one letter conjured up at once all the ideas that we associate with a crude and childish age, an age when artists drew those queer, flat, angular figures with legs and arms as stiff and thin as sticks, figures whose faces are turned towards you when their bodies are not, figures to which the scribblings of some children come nearer in spirit than the imitations of the best modern artists, and which, even while we are laughing at them, fill us with all the inexpressible pathos of antiquity. But Chaucer is full of such instances—words and lines that burst suddenly upon you and leave you with the strange feeling of a man who does not know whether to laugh or cry:

‘And smalé fowlés maken melodye  
That slepen al the nyght with open eye.’

Or

‘Allas the wo, allas the peynés stronge  
That I for yow have suffred, and so longe.’

And there is the little murdered child in the Prioress’s Tale who cries:

‘My throte is kut unto my nekké boon.’

Chaucer’s poetry does not depend on this unconscious effect for its immortality, but the additional touch of it is ineffably charming to us to-day, and with a charm that is often inexplicably but very deeply touching. And yet there have been people who thought that he needed ‘polishing’ and tried to do it. These people would rub the warm red stain of time off an old bronze to make it look ‘smart.’ But smart things are hard and cold things, and Dryden only glitters where Chaucer delights.

There is Spenser too with his ‘bloudie battails,’ his ‘straunge adventures’ and ‘pleasaunt bowres’; and what a world of difference there is between the very look of the words Faery and Fairy! Only one letter, and yet the one calls up a vision of gauze wings and starched frills suspended on wires worked by minions in the roof, and the other of

‘Magic casements opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas in Faery lands forlorn.’

Or read ‘Tom Jones’ with his ‘surprizing’ adventures; the very word so spelt seems hard and crude like nine-tenths of the

characters in the book and so much of the literature of the age. The spelling is nearly modernised by now, but such a word as 'choak' looks as coarse and vulgar as Squire Western himself.

If you have read 'The Young Visitors' by Daisy Ashford (aged nine), and lived for a time in that vividly present but unreal 'society,' you must have noticed that the world the authoress has created is not merely a world in which invitations are accompanied by gifts of top hats, Prime Ministers 'talk passionately about the laws' over their ices, and bathrooms are fitted up with 'dodges of a rich nature'; but it is a world whose inhabitants are always having 'rather a good idear,' a world of 'sumpshousness' and 'presumpshousness,' of 'queariness' and 'gaierty' and 'society,' etc. Think of the difference between an idea and an idear! Civilise the spelling and you destroy the atmosphere. The new world is still there, but it is a different world and Mr. Salteena is a different person. He loses some of his quaintness and charm, and we lose some of our affection for him. Try the experiment of having the book read aloud to you and you will understand at once; for even in cases where the mis-spelling of a word can be indicated by mispronunciation that last touch of magic will have disappeared. The characters, in no case conventional, by means of the sustained effect of mis-spelling take on the vague lineaments of creatures as unearthly as Ariel. They seem like half-created beings, beings who have ceased growing before they are quite out of the egg, their creator having been unable to develop them any further; so there they stop and kick and flop about ludicrously with their gawky antics. But enough of this; that book has been too much discussed and theorised upon already without any additions of mine.

I sometimes wish we could return to the old days when spelling was optional. I believe it would be as good an indication of character as handwriting; one can imagine the amiable old pedant spelling each word meticulously according to its history and derivation, the absent-minded beggar spelling the same word six different ways in one letter, the strong-minded young woman with her stern phonetics, and the Person who is Determined to be Unconventional at All Costs working on a little system of his own quite different from everybody else's.

OWEN BARFIELD.

## ON THE PAMPAS.

THE Pampas of Argentina correspond closely to the Mississippi valley of the United States and the great plains of the Canadian North-West, but nowhere else in the world is there so large an area that approaches so near to an absolute level. The exigencies of railroad building best illustrate this fact. Look at a large-scale map of any of the flattest of the Middle-Western States of North America and observe how no red line representing a railroad holds to a much straighter course than that of a row of children playing hippety-hop across a broad lawn. This is because the country is not level; the curves are to reduce a gradient that cannot be avoided by cuts or fills. Now look at a railroad map of Argentina and see how the lines radiate from Buenos Aires like the spokes of a wheel. Whether north-west to Rosario or Cordoba, west to the Andes, south-west to the Pampa Central, or south to Mar del Plata and Bahia Blanca, their course is invariably almost perfectly direct. The Buenos Aires and Pacific railroad has the longest 'straight' in the world where, between Vedia and Mackenna, in the heart of the Pampas, the rails run for 175 miles without an inch of curve, and but for a slight 'S' at the former place would continue so for 206 miles. This is indicative of the real thing in level land.

To the average inhabitant of the Pampas a gentle swell on the bosom of the plain is a thing of interest, and a hill something to revere; I don't know exactly what his idea of heaven is, but I feel perfectly safe in assuming that it contains mountains.

The level nature of the country would appear effectually to preclude any possibility of deriving excitement from a stage ride across it, especially that of the kind incident to being whirled around the faces of the mile-high cliffs of the Sierras. But if there are no cliffs to whirl around, neither are there any roads to follow, and there are actually places on the Pampas where the high winds often obliterate any track there may have been, making it necessary for the drivers to navigate their stages, like ships at sea, by compass. There is also another factor that enters to neutralise the soporific effect of balmy air and billowy plain. This is the horse as employed by the Argentiño, whose part I will endeavour to make plain.

The Argentine stage driver uses horses much as some people



do whisky. If one four doesn't seem to produce the effect he desires he adds another four, and then four more, and so on indefinitely. But whereas there is usually some outside limit to the number of whiskies necessary to produce a given effect, there is apparently no point beyond which the Argentine stage driver's thirst for horses may not lead him.

The first four horses are in harness and usually abreast, as, on rare occasions, are also the second four. All further additions are in the nature of 'led' or 'ridden' horses attached by means of a long rope or chain to the end of the pole or the double-trees. These latter are strung out in pairs of a 'led' and a 'ridden' horse each. They are usually the property of the *gauchos* who have them in charge, their owners being always willing to exchange a pull with their ponies over a bad stretch of country for a pull at the driver's skin of *caña* or sugar-cane rum.

Suppose you are starting out on a morning after a good hard storm of wind and rain has reduced the surface of the earth along the way you must travel to an endless succession of sticky quagmires and hard-bottomed, steep-sided gullies. The driver, full of importance, rounds up all the spare horses and *gauchos* in the village, passing around his *bota* of *caña* among the latter while he directs them in attaching a long line of the former to the stage. Any horses beyond the number deemed necessary for immediate use are herded on behind as reserves. Then off you go, and by sheer force of numbers the lumbering vehicle is hauled along at a rate of speed most astonishing considering the nature of the ground. There is a plenitude of jolt, too, and the landscape dances before your eyes in a dizzy blur.

The advantage of the 'open order' arrangement becomes apparent at your first gully, for there, though some of the horses may be belly-deep in mud, and others pawing helplessly for footing against a sheer-cut bank, thanks to the extreme length of the formation there is always a sufficient number of animals on firm ground to pull everything through. Over and through, but never round, small *barrancas* and sink holes the coach rushes like a bull at a gate, finally, perhaps, to bring up in crossing a heavily-wooded *arroyo*, with the wheels wedged and clogged up in a mixture composed of about equal parts of yellow clay and storm-felled tree trunks. This is the thing the driver loves, and with eyes that glow with the joy born only of an absolute knowledge of ability to triumph over the situation, he leaps on to his seat and calls



for (naturally you would expect he would call for nothing but axes and shovels) more horses.

The reserves are promptly driven in, more rope and chain brought out, and every animal, including, perhaps, those of several stray *gauchos* who have been attracted to the spot by the commotion, directly or indirectly attached to the stage. Then the *bota* of *caña* is passed around and the big show begins.

Some of the ropes run back to the hind axle, some to the brake, and some even to the wheels; and some of the horses are pulling at right angles to the line of advance and almost directly against each other. No two Argentine horses are of the same mind for more than a few seconds at a time, and considering the number of them engaged in the extrication process it is a matter of the greatest wonder that the stage does not undergo sudden disintegration like the 'one-hoss shay.' The quivers and shivers, and demi-semi-quivers and shivers that run through its stout frame as it slowly oozes through the obstruction in its path are comparable in my knowledge only to the combined latitudinal, longitudinal and circular action that run riot in the body of a Tahitienne in the throes of a *hula*. The operation strongly suggests the medieval torture of tearing a man to pieces by connecting up a horse to each extremity and galloping them to the four points of the compass.

Being built, however, to withstand just such treatment, the old stage usually pops out of the mess unharmed, and after the hamper has been cut away and everything made snug again, resumes the uneven but not uneventful tenor of its way. Your stage ride to the heart of the Pampas will be at times uncomfortable but never monotonous.

The Pampas of to-day are not the Pampas of thirty years ago. Then the only pursuits were pastoral; now those agricultural have taken the lead and are rapidly increasing in importance. Formerly, master and man lived alike; both in mud huts and on a diet of *carne asado*, *galletas*, and *maté*. Now these are for the peons, while the master divides his time between his palatial *estancia* house, where he lives like a medieval baron, and Buenos Aires and Europe. Probably nowhere else in the world, certainly not outside the great cities, is there so great a gulf between the standards of living of the highest and the lowest. Nowhere have I seen such lavishly-run establishments as those of these land kings of Argentina, both native and British, and nowhere among Caucasians have I seen such primitive living as among the *gauchos*

of the same country. It is an amusing and novel experience to sit with the knees under mahogany and sip French wine from a glass of Mauzé crystal one day, and the next to hunch up on a horse-skull stool and suck *maté* through a *bombilla* that has gone the round of a dozen other mouths before it comes to yours; or perhaps to have English lamb chops and French peas for eleven o'clock breakfast and for five o'clock dinner a hunk of smoky, greasy *carne asado*, cooked on a steel spike in the midst of an open fire and eaten by holding in the hands and rending with the teeth.

The most characteristic figure of the Pampas is their cowboy, the *gaucho*. As a handler of stock he is possibly the peer of a Queensland drover, but is certainly not to be mentioned in the same breath with a Texas, Arizona, or Montana cowboy, nor with the best of Mexican vaqueros. This was very conclusively shown some years ago when a half-dozen Texas cowboys appeared in Buenos Aires on an exhibition tour and demonstrated to the satisfaction of everybody that in the handling of horses and cattle, both in method and execution, the North American is far superior to the South American. At no branch of their work did the cowboys fail to make the *gauchos* appear fairly ludicrous in comparison. In roping and tying, and in breaking and riding untamed horses, steers, and mules the work of the Texans was neat and expeditious, that of the Argentiños clumsy and slow. A cowboy would rope and tie a steer in from thirty to forty seconds so deftly that it could be released by a single pull, where a *gaucho* would spend five minutes smothering the animal in coils of rope from which a surgical operation was usually required to release it.

But the *gaucho* makes up for his deficiency in handling stock in another way; he has no peer on earth in the use of the knife. It is a common thing to say of a *gaucho* that he was born with a knife in his hand, and one often sees babes scarcely out of arms playing with knives half as long as their bodies. To a *gaucho* his knife is weapon, instrument, implement, and utensil, and things another man would need a score or more of contrivances to aid him in performing, he accomplishes with *facon* alone.

The staple article of diet on the Pampas is *carne asado*. This is usually a leg of mutton that has been scorched to a cinder on the outside and left raw in the middle. The principal duty of the *gaucho's* knife is to cut off his hunk of *carne*. Things go all right as long as he only cuts off his own share, but if he cuts away a bit of another man's *carne* there is usually trouble. The result of one

of these little 'pound of flesh' disputes is worth going miles to see, if for no other reason than for the remarkable display of knife work that is sure to follow. No one ever thinks of interfering, and there is usually a pronounced case of vivisection left over as a souvenir.

A cutting affray is a common sight on the streets of Buenos Aires, but a *façon* in the hands of a Paseo de Colon *peon* is a meat-axe to a rapier compared to the same weapon in the hands of a *gaucho* of the Pampas. Though genuine, dead-in-earnest fights to a finish between two of these knife experts is not a thing to be encountered every day, often night after night—in fact it is their principal diversion when work is over—you may see them pair off and fight one another to a standstill with all the fury of the real thing, except that the knives remain sheathed in order to prevent serious injury.

Whether the bout be friendly or for blood the method of procedure is much the same. The combatants face each other with their knives in their right hands and their closely folded *ponchos* thrown over their left forearms. In action the points of the blades are usually inclined downward. Each man keeps the point of his weapon constantly in motion in order to deceive his opponent as to the exact moment he is going to strike. The parry of a thrust is similar to that in rapier play; but the thrust itself is more often downward than horizontally or upward for reasons I will endeavour to make clear in a moment. If a thrust fails to be parried by the knife the folded *poncho* is brought into play as a shield, for which purpose it serves more than indifferently well. The *gaucho* prizes his *poncho* second only to his knife, and he would no sooner think of parting with one than the other. And as he values his knife the more highly for every opponent it has killed or disabled, so the more store he sets by his *poncho* for every additional time it has saved him from death or disability. But whereas a knife has ordinarily little to show for the fights it has been through, the *poncho* rarely comes unscathed from a mix-up; hence it is, that, as a *gaucho* will never sew up a knife or a bullet hole in a *poncho*, nor likewise will he discard it while there is enough unbroken warp and woof left to hold it together, those of some of the belligerent old swash-bucklers that one meets would put an historic battle flag to shame on the score of rags and tatters.

There is no etiquette regarding above- and below-the-belt thrusts

in knife play on the Pampas; in fact, of the two, the latter is the more popular—with the giver, of course, I mean. The result of a below-the-belt cut is not a pretty thing to contemplate by any means, but from the point of effectiveness it is decidedly the best stroke in the game. It is very easy to speak of stabbing a man to the heart, but actually to do it, particularly with a broad-bladed knife, or anything, in fact, but a thin stiletto or rapier, is quite a different matter. The ribs are placed where and as they are as an armour to protect the heart and lungs. Your real knife man—I mean the man who fights for his life with his knife unhampered by convention or tradition—recognises this fact; hence it is that the *gaucho* thrusts downward instead of upward, and that the result of a postmortem on a dead *gaucho* will usually show that death came as a result of a solution of the continuity of a greater or lesser portion of his digestive apparatus.

The danger zone encircling a *gaucho* with his knife in his hand is by no means limited to the circle he sweeps with his extended arm. I am not sure just how far it does go, nor have I the least desire to find out. I heard, however, a crack revolver shot, a man who could blot out the spots on a ten of spades at a dozen paces, say that he would be extremely reluctant to take his chance at a draw-and-let-go with a *gaucho* at any distance under twenty yards. An illuminative case in point came to my attention in Buenos Aires. As a class the American agricultural machinery experts sent to Argentina are as handy with six-shooters as any I have ever met. They are mostly Westerners, have used revolvers from their childhood, and their arms, from which they never separate themselves for a moment while in *campo*, are always of the best and latest pattern. Not once or twice, but on dozens of occasions, have I seen one or another of these men with his Colt's or Mauser 'automatic,' after a preliminary shot or two to get the range, bowl over a rabbit running at full speed across the *pampa*. This is good shooting, as will be appreciated by anyone who has had experience of the revolver. Yet the case I have in mind is that of a threshing machine expert from Texas—a crack shot—who had trouble with his Argentine *maquinista*, had an even break on a draw at twenty-five or thirty feet, and was retired from action with a knife through his shoulder before his revolver was clear of its holster.

My own experience of the *gaucho's* skill in knife-throwing, though not as serious, was quite as convincing as the one I have

just detailed. It chanced that a man at an *estancia* I visited was famous for his skill in this particular, and one day I was ill-advised enough to admire the marvellous deftness with which he was plotting out the outline of a human profile upon the woodwork of a threshing machine by chucking his *facon* into it from a distance of eight or ten feet. He acknowledged my compliments with a characteristic *gaucho* bow and smile, but assured me that what I had seen was nothing, since it required no exercise of nerve on his own part nor that of anybody else; but if I would do him the honour to walk off about fifteen paces and hold up the little piece of paper I saw on the ground there, he would perhaps be able to show me a feat that was really worth while. I walked meekly off as directed, but with a sinking heart, for I didn't need to be told that I was to hold that accursed bit of paper up while my black-bearded, careless-eyed friend tried to hurl his eighteen-inch-bladed knife through the middle of it without amputating my hand, and I was never so lacking in enthusiasm for any proposition in my life. Courage to hold the thing up I knew I had—that was a small matter—but I didn't want to hold it up, and of courage to refuse I had none at all. Besides, I had admired the fellow's skill, and he undoubtedly figured he was doing me no small honour in permitting me to be a party to his exhibition; to refuse to act the part of a passive foil would be, under the circumstances, an offence unpardonable.

Inwardly, I was in a terrible turmoil, but focussing all my attention upon the parts that showed, I managed to present a fairly unruffled exterior. The piece of paper I found to be a page from the popular Buenos Aires weekly, *Caras y Caretas*, measuring, I should say, about five inches by eight. This, after cramming my pipe in my mouth, I held out in one hand with all the appearance of nonchalance I could muster, but grasping no bigger a piece of the corner than was absolutely necessary to keep it from fluttering away. With my free hand I scratched a match; then nodded what was intended for an indifferent acquiescence in response to the *gaucho's* interrogation as to whether or not I was '*listo*,' and at the moment when the knife went '*whicking*' through the paper without so much as tearing its edges I was vigorously puffing away for a light. I continued to puff until my match went out before I discovered that I was trying to light an empty pipe. For the next two weeks I had '*facon*' nightmares every time I dropped off to sleep.

This little incident, in no consequence of itself, was the immediate cause of another that resulted more seriously. It appears that scarcely had I left the harvesting outfit to return to the *estancia* house, when one of the Italian hands declared that he, too, was an expert in knife-throwing, and called for a volunteer to hold up the paper that he might give proof of his skill. The *gauchos* and Argentine *peons* laughed at his pretensions, but an English sailor, who had deserted his ship in Bahia Blanca to take advantage of the high wages paid in harvest time, foolishly walked over and held up the punctured sheet. Probably he did not appreciate how difficult a thing the feat really was. If he had, after the Italian had missed the paper by a foot the first throw, he would have seen he was dealing with a novice and withdrawn before it was too late. As it was, the knife, at the second trial, struck the unfortunate fellow upon the inside of the wrist, tore its way through bone and sinew, to leave the hand hanging by only a few shreds of flesh and tendon. We saved him from bleeding to death with a tourniquet, but the hand, of course, had to be sacrificed.

The childish stupidity of the *gaucho* in the handling of agricultural machinery is as remarkable as his cleverness in other directions. I have in mind two instances in point which would be rather amusing but for their tragic results. On one occasion the *maquinista* or engineer had needlessly removed the nut that held the fly-wheel of his threshing machine engine in order to grease the bearing. As he was about to screw it on again he observed one of his *peons* in the act of stealing some stores from the provision wagon, upon which he promptly pelted the nut at the culprit's head, following it up with an attack in person. When justice was done and order restored siesta hour was over, and, forgetting the missing nut, the *maquinista* gave the order to start the engine. This was done, and the fly-wheel had no sooner begun to approach its maximum velocity of three or four hundred revolutions a minute than it flew off, shot straight at the separator, a hundred feet distant, tore its way through that valuable machine, completely wrecking it, and finally ended up in a straw stack. Incidentally, three or four *peons* were killed, though neither of the responsible parties, the *maquinista* nor the fly-wheel, was in the least injured.

The other accident was a still more aggravated case, both as to cause and result. On a certain morning the newly-appointed *maquinista* of an outfit in the Pampa Central had invited over a



party of friends to watch him make the wheels go round, take a few social pulls at the *caña* bottle, and generally make merry in honour of his promotion. It appears that there was a certain young woman among the invited guests upon whom the young engineer was particularly desirous of making an impression, and to this end, on the morning of the big day, he set about doing the best he knew in the matter of toilet. Not having a mirror at hand to assist in the work of greasing and curling his beard, he looked about for a substitute, and his evil genius directed his eyes to the shining dial of the steam gauge of the threshing machine engine. The story of what followed was brought out by the court of investigation convened in Santa Rosa de Toay to fix the responsibility for the killing of fifteen persons and the serious wounding of twenty-three more by the explosion of the boiler of a threshing-machine engine.

It was brought out in court that the young engineer, not able to fix his image to his satisfaction in the dial of the steam gauge while the latter was in place, unscrewed that important bit of mechanism and hung it up against the side of his bunk wagon. Anxious to have it as a mirror to refer to from time to time during the day, he did not restore it to its place when he started the fires under the boiler, but, knowing enough to understand that he could not make steam while there was a vent in the latter, he plugged up the aperture with an iron spike and proceeded as usual.

The engine ran beautifully all the morning while exhaust through the cylinders kept the pressure down, but when the stop was made for eleven o'clock breakfast it made steam rapidly—unheeded, of course, on account of the absence of the gauge—and about noon, just as the visiting party was nicely bunched around a pot of *maté con leche*, blew up with terrific force. The visitors were nearly all killed outright, and a number of harvest hands as well. The *maquinista* was almost the only person unhurt—probably the special Providence that watches over fools had a hand in the matter—but he lost his job and his sweetheart—she came in the way of one of the 1300-pound drive wheels of the engine—and was sentenced to eight years hard labour in Tierra del Fuego into the bargain.

Except 'behind his knife,' the *gaucho* is, perhaps, at his best at a dance. The knife, of course, goes with him to the dance, and he occasionally gets behind it, but as it is a point of honour not to fight under a friend's roof these little side issues rarely mar the



pleasure of the dance proper. If there is a dispute, and two men go out and only one returns, it is also a point of etiquette, scrupulously observed by both host and guests, to make no allusion to the apparent lack of interest, on the part of the missing man, in the evening's subsequent proceedings.

These *campo* dances are more or less elaborate affairs according to the pretensions of the houses giving them, and as a general rule one finds the best fun in the roughest surroundings. On entering the house where the dance is being held you are ushered at once to the kitchen—there will often be not more than two rooms anyhow—where you will find the rest of the guests sitting around drinking *maté*. You shake hands with the heads of the family, nod to the rest, and take your place in the ring about the *maté* pot to await developments. If there is a chair in the house it will be offered you in deference to the 'distinguido' position you are supposed to occupy in the world of affairs, as outlined by your Argentine friend and sponsor in soliciting your invitation. If there is no chair, you get the broadest and smoothest horse-skull to sit upon, or, if you prefer, a blanket.

The girls present, you will observe, are robustly developed, straight-backed young persons who carry themselves with the easy grace of lady lions, and who meet your eyes with less of insolence, but with all the assurance of the hot-house beauties of Buenos Aires. They are garbed neatly in dresses that cover them from shoulder to shoe-top, and have a lot of funny fixings on that are difficult for a man to describe. The men are of the *gaucho* type, and brave in all the splendour of their best *ponchos*, *chiripas*, and *tiradors*.

The *chiripa* is like a *poncho* without a hole in it, and does about the same service for the legs as the latter does for the shoulders. All wear loose half-top boots, gaudy handkerchiefs about the neck, broad-brimmed *sombreros*, and, crowning feature of all, huge foot-wide belts, the *tiradors*. One of these unique affairs may have anywhere from four to a dozen pockets or bags sewed on to it, as well as a sheath for a knife and a holster for a revolver. It is very useful as a carry-all, but its principal utility lies in the protection from knife thrusts afforded the abdomen by its great width. Those worn at dances are often decorated with embroidery and silver work.

Dancing is begun on the earthen floor of the kitchen. The two most popular dances are the *gato* and *jota*. In the *gato* you step out to the music of a guitar, the musician picking away for

five minutes or more at a kind of monotonous 'strumpity-strump' tune, from which he finally breaks into a song. When the song starts you must, according to the rules, stop dancing and salute your partner with an appropriate verse of poetry. She, in turn, must counter with a similar verse, and then, the song being over, you swing off again to the 'strumpity-strump.'

The *jota* is a cross between a Highland Fling and a Spanish fandango. Dancing it, you and your partner face, without touching, each other, do a sort of double shuffle with your feet, snap your fingers above your heads in imitation of castanets, and all the time gaze fixedly into each other's eyes. This last is the principal rule of the game, and if you disregard it and let your eyes wander for an instant to where another girl is dancing, your partner stops work immediately, gives her shoulders a shrug and her head a toss and goes back to her 'horse-skull' in a huff. This 'making the eyes behave' is a hard thing for a novice to do, and the failure to make good at it is pretty sure to mar the performance of your initial *jota*.

The *gato* (it was from this dance the 'rag' and 'tango' were evolved) is better; all the dancing you have to do is a kind of rhythmic surging to and fro, like the action of a couple too fat to swing around each other in a waltz. You are also permitted to put your arm around the girl, a prerogative, however, which, if you are well advised, you will exercise only in the most brotherly manner; otherwise you will always stand in danger of being favoured with an invitation from a jealous sweetheart to accompany him off into the moonshine to fight for the hand and heart of the lady, to both of which his pig head has made him believe you aspire. In this event it is a hundred to one you will be the missing man of whose lack of interest it is etiquette for neither the host nor the guests to take notice.

A dance lasts from whenever it begins to something after sunrise the next morning. You have supper about midnight and a breakfast toward daylight; both consist principally of a hot stew of rice and mutton called a *gisa*. Men and women are served separately, though for what reason I was unable to learn. Between dances, if you do as the rest do, you suck up *maté* through a pewter tube and drink *caña*; there is no promenading with your partner in the moonlight. *Caña* is a good thing to avoid, as it has the peculiar faculty of swooping down upon the faculties of the drinker with all the suddenness and fury of a delayed charge of dynamite when he thinks it is not affecting his head in the least.

By the time the hour of breaking up arrives everyone is completely tired out, done up and run down, and as you ride off and turn to wave farewell to the bunch of drawn, white faces blinking out in your direction against the glare of the morning sun, you wonder what in the world has possessed you to have made you so happy all night in the company of such an odd-looking lot of people ; a thought, I daresay, that has crossed the minds of many who have stayed up all night at dances nearer home than those on the outermost fringes of the great Argentine Pampas.

LEWIS R. FREEMAN.

## THE ELEPHANT.

### A FANTASY.

DEEP, deep in the jungle, where no man has ever trod, since first the earth reared her rugged shoulders out of ocean, there is a valley. A babbling stream from the mountain summit leaps down into its depth under the creeper-entwined trees that grow and die, decay and fall, in undisturbed solemnity. Under the valley's steep sides, there is a level space of long lalang grass, that grows rampant and luxuriant in its never-ending war with the forest. Through these few acres of open, the stream pursues a level course, and ceases for a while its chattering.

The forest is silent—undisturbed save for the screech of the hornbill, and the occasional crack of a dry twig under foot of some incautious animal, or, more seldom still, the awe-inspiring rending crash of a falling tree far off—perhaps the most tragic sound of all jungle life. But its silence is not that of emptiness; rather it is a silence full of sound, a silence that would keep the senses tense with the knowledge that all manner of beasts are afoot, each moving amid a wall of green that may at any moment reveal an enemy, each knowing that the slightest sound may give warning to a foe. From the smallest mouse-deer that pricks its pretty ears, and moves so daintily that it scarcely seems to crush the tenderest blade of grass, to the bulky elephant, that sways and munches the juicy shoots, all have the same sense of grace, like clever dancers in a crowded room; every muscle is alert to come into play at the slightest touch. Strangeness in form, or sound, or smell, causes instant action. For the law of the jungle is silence and preparedness; only the chattering apes seem exempt—the foil to impress the law. They, the type of folly and mock wisdom, swing and sway, calling and singing across the miles of tree-tops—the fools that raise their voices among the wisdom of the ages.

From east and west, and north and south, to this valley, come, at a certain season of a certain year, the elephants. From the far-off rivers, where plies the boat of man; from the hills that overhang the rubber gardens; along the narrow paths between the watersheds they come, shouldering their way from Benom—that lonely mass of cloud-capped mountains—from Tahan, where

the boundary line runs, from the fastness of Upper Perak, from the swamps of Johore they come, silently, stealthily, hundreds of thousands; and last of all, comes their great Lord and Rajah. Very old he is, with the age that gives majesty to the mountains, his sides are scarred with a thousand wars, and in his brain is the wisdom of the ages. At his coming is way made before him, and the air is filled with thousands of upraised trunks, for the time has come for him to die, and the assembly waits to appoint his successor.

In silence he stands before them on a little hill, as though to challenge, if any can impeach his rule; swaying slightly, he raises his trunk and trumpets four times to the four corners of the world; for so it is ordained by jungle lore; and the mountains re-echo the sound of his challenge, but there is no other reply. Then, in silence once more, the throng make way before him, as alone and for the last time he passes down the aisle they form. Slowly, majestically, he goes, out from the clearing, up from valley to the ridge-top, where the trees grow more sparsely, out on his long five days' trek to the very heart of the mountains, with waning strength, knowing that this is his last royal progress through the green realm that was his. The boars, startled at his coming, scurry off; the tiger pauses, knowing that a king mightier than he passes; the very monkeys in the tree-tops stop their boasting to watch him as he travels.

Slowly—very slowly at the end—upward and ever upward, till he reaches the appointed place, the cemetery of kings. It is the summit of a very high mountain, that falls sheer on three sides, but on the fourth is approached by a steep and narrow ridge. From time immemorial, it has been kept clear of all trees, only the green grass grows stragglingly around and above the whitening bones of former kings. Darkness reigns when he reaches his goal—the cold darkness that precedes the dawn. Slowly, with ever failing strength, he moves to the very summit where the bones lie thickest. In the east a thin grey line heralds the day, and the dawn wind blows chill. Dimly and mysteriously the mountains assume their shapes, as the grey turns slowly to rose. It seems the very roof-tree of the world, whereon he stands, as though earth were covered in a deep-piled carpet of trees with a fantastic pattern interwoven by the silver strands of the rivers. Below, deep below, can be heard the roar of the mountain stream, that clothes the near valley in a mantle of mist. Slowly, very slowly,

the rose turns to red ; the lip of the sun cuts the eastern horizon, and suddenly it is day. The distant mountains leap into detailed forms. Flame o' the Forest shines from the nearer slopes, and the monkeys' song of praise is taken up from hill to hill, swelling and falling to welcome the coming warmth, and he, the king of all this realm, must die.

Of where he lies it may be said, as of another grave on the east of Jordan, 'No man knoweth his sepulchre unto this day.' Only among the hunting Sakai there is a tale, that he who finds the burial place of the elephants shall be rich in ivory, beyond the avarice of man. May it ever sleep in blessed oblivion, secure in the tender guardianship of the impenetrable jungle.

C. S. DURST.



## MADAME GILBERT'S CANNIBAL.

BY BENNET COPPLESTONE.

### VI.—THE SAILING OF THE YAWL.

THE days passed, no more island schooners put in for night shelter at the entrance to the bay, and the Hedge Lawyer gained with every passing day a tighter grip upon the vagrant mind of Willatopy. The great Lord made the villain work for the pleasure of seeing a white man sweat in his service, but in the intervals of labour the two of them became host and guest, rather than master and slave. And hour by hour the cunning hand of the lawyer, deftly kneading the soft wax of the native boy's intelligence, obliterated the impressions left by his father's teaching. Willatopy still declared at intervals that he would never go to England, but his tone had lost much of its old conviction. The once fixed resolution was degenerating into a verbal formula.

For awhile Clifford stuck to the first inducements of which he had demonstrated the effective potency. White women at Willatopy's seignorial pleasure, white men as his humble willing slaves, yachts and buzz boats at his orders—Willatopy was salt to the bones—and then, as his grip became firmer, Clifford bethought him of a further engine of influence and devised a means of bringing it into early operation. Immovably bent upon the one purpose of bearing Willatopy as a helpless fly into the spider's web of St. Mary Axe—and of securing that junior partnership for himself—Clifford perceived that a corrupted degenerate Willatopy would be a prey more profitable to the plunderer than the healthy shrewd sportsman of Tops Island. Wholly unscrupulous, it was nothing to him that a brave human soul should be lost. Willatopy was in his eyes not a human soul but a much desired client. After having been won over and despoiled in the interests of St. Mary Axe, the twenty-eighth lord of Topsham might go to the devil as fast as he pleased. The more he could be prevailed upon to dip into the Toppys estates—no great property by modern standards—the larger would be the profit of Chudleigh, Caves, Caves & Chudleigh, poachers and speculators in law. I am no effusive admirer of Roger Gatepath, the solicitor of peers and princes, but

the dingy honesty of Gatepaths was white as driven snow in comparison with the black foulness of Chudleighs.

One morning while running to her shark-proof creek for the customary dip after her physical exercises—Madame never neglected P.T. under any pressure of engagements, and to this persistence in muscular well-doing attributed her exuberant health and appetite—one morning early Madame perceived that the mooring station of the yawl was empty. Upon her return she was informed that Willatopy, accompanied as always by his white slave John, had sailed at dawn with the first of the ebb. Ching, who had spent the night in the escort tent and had been early astir, had watched through his binoculars the pair go forth towards the bar. Madame concluded that Willie, tired of making John sweat in his garden, had borne him off upon an island cruise for the pleasure of harrying a white man's stomach. John hated the heaving ocean, and had suffered horribly on his trip from Thursday Island in the schooner. John, in Madame's judgment, could not have gone willingly and would soon prevail upon Willatopy to return. But in this view Madame was wrong. John Clifford, bad sailor though he was, had braved the swell and tide rips of the uneasy Straits that he might bring into operation that further engine of influence upon whose effectiveness he placed sure confidence.

A day and a night passed, and yet another day and night. The yawl did not return. Madame's apprehension swelled into panic. It was, of course, absurd to suppose that a navigator of Willatopy's competence had suffered a marine disaster in his own familiar Straits at the settled season of the south-east trade. Anxiety of that kind was absent from Madame's thoughts. Her fears took an altogether different line. She was obsessed by the dread lest Willatopy, under the rapidly growing influence of Clifford, had sailed for Thursday Island en route for England. Grant, the banker, held considerable sums at the boy's disposal—or, rather, since Willatopy was a minor, the banker and executor held considerable sums which he might be prevailed upon to hand over. Even if, as was not improbable, Grant proved obdurate, the lawyer John Clifford must have been provided with ample cash or credits for travelling expenses. Ching and Ewing were both ashore and she commanded their attendance.

The Devonshire ship captain and the Glasgow engineer had been close friends during half their lives, and habit had made them inseparable. In temperament, as we have seen, they were far

apart. Though sprung from kindred races—there is no great difference in blood between the Lowland Glasgow Scot and the West Country Englishman—they were typical representatives of distinct branches of the British stock. The soft and bountiful Devon produces sailors rather than engineers; the harsher and leaner North produces engineers rather than sailors. I cannot now stop to explain why. In association Ching and Ewing were complementary, the one to the other. Both of them loved Madame Gilbert but their affection, though sincere, was too platonic to excite serious rivalry. They would dine together in the big saloon of the yacht—at a table which had accommodation for twelve persons—and discuss over Sir John's port the merits of the gracious lady who had betaken herself to the shore. Later on they would carry the discussion to the smoke-room where the three had so often sat and applied their foot rules to the universe during the long voyage out from England. Every few days, moved by a common impulse which Ewing shamelessly avowed and Ching sought to conceal, they would disembark and cast up in Madame's camp. It was understood that both remained in the yacht at their unexact-ing care and maintenance duties, or both revelled in Madame's welcome smiles. They took their duties and their pleasure in company.

'My friends,' said Madame, smiling and affecting a levity which she just then did not feel, 'lend me your ears.

"The time has come," La Gilbert said,

"To give you a surprise;

To tell of yachts and reefs and tents,

Of blackamoors and peers,

And why she's come to this far land,

And what it is she fears."

'As a piece of impromptu poeetry,' said Ewing, 'yon is no so bad. If it is impromptu, about which I have my doubts. And since my home is in Paisley, where all the pooets come from, my judgment is creetical.'

Ching shot one penetrative glance at Madame and perceptibly paled under his weather-beaten skin.

'Further,' went on Ewing cautiously—he could babble as gleefully and interminably as Madame herself—'Further, I question the judeecious use of the worr-rd "surprise." In the leetery sense its employment is bad, for it does not rhyme, and as a statement

of fact it is erroneous. I will not say that I cannot be surprised by anybody in the wurr-ld, though they that have tried to astonish me have been up against a sair obstacle. What I assert now is that Madame Gilbert has no surprise for me, and little enough for Ching.'

'Wait,' warned Madame, with assurance, 'I have not yet spoken. The worst of talking to you, Alexander is, that one can never wedge a wurr-ld in.'

'Go canny, lassie,' proceeded Ewing. 'Go canny. Be not over boastful. You have been a bonny actress all these weeks past, but not so bonny that you can deceive Sandy Ewing. I had my suspecions from the first when that Willatopy boy revealed to us the secret of his bairth. And since then I have been conning my eye over the bit registers in Thursday Island.'

'Tis a wash-out,' admitted Madame. 'I have not seen those famous registers myself, but I understand that they would convince a brazen image.'

'They are as tight as a drum and as adhesive as a pepper plaster. The joints of them are steam tight to any pressure. You could na shift them with T.N.T. My metaphors may be a wee bit mixed, but there is nothing of confusion about those registers. If you would like to see fair copies I have them now in my hip pocket. Three half crowns they cost me—for the certificate of the registrar. It was a turrible expense.'

'You are a great man, Sandy,' said Madame.

'The Scots were ever a grand people, and Sandy Ewing is one of the grandest among them. *Primus inter Pares*. But a woman of your perspicacity, though a foreigner and a Roman, will not have neglected to obsairve that we are of a modesty beyond belief. We none of us ever blow our own trumpets.'

'Never,' assented Madame, 'You employ a steam syren.'

'Then it be all true,' groaned Ching, who had remained silent during this interchange. Except in the speech of his profession his tongue was inflexible. The babble of his friends broke upon him as the sea foam on an immovable rock. 'Then it be all true. That Moor be the rightful lord of Topsham.'

'It is true,' said Madame gently. 'We must make the best of it, Captain.' Much as Madame Gilbert admired and respected the solid merits of Robert Ching she never relaxed towards him her form of address. He was always 'Captain.' The chief engineer had long since become the 'Alexander' of reproof, or

the 'Sandy' of familiar converse. One may respect, and in emergency cling to, an immovable rock. But one does not pat it familiarly.

'Whatzimever be us vur to do?' wailed Ching, reverting in distress to the peasant dialect of his youth.

'I do not hold,' put in Ewing, 'that it is for us to do anything. I am a Leebereal, a good Scots Leebereal. In Paisley, where my home is and where the poeets come from, we have always been steadfast unshakable Leeberals. No argument can shift us. For ten years past we have done our Leebereal best to pull down the House of Lor-r-ds, and Willatopy is a damn sight better than most of the scum of them. His skin is an accident of bairth. If his skin had come as white as his eyes are blue he would have been a vairy presentable head for the house of Toppys. He has, it seems to me, all the instincts of the idle rich, and what more can you Tories want? He is a grand pilot and a very hardy sailor and sportsman. His eye for the gurr-rls is worthy of the loftiest aristocrat. It is nothing but the brown epidermis which sets Ching here groaning like a cow, and Madame bewailing the undoubted legitimacy of a Topy heir.'

'Not quite,' objected Madame, though she was impressed by the Scot's shrewd analysis. 'I admit that if Willatopy had been born white, or no darker than his sisters, his lawyers at home would long ago have summoned him to claim his peerage. His half-blood would not then have made the Family a butt for ridicule. But to me his half-blood and not his skin is an occasion for genuine distress. It is because Willatopy here in his own Tops Island is so artless and attractive a creature that I dread the effect of his transfer to England, and his succession to what still is, even in these democratic days, an eminence ringed about with peculiar and dangerous temptations. Let me give you an opinion of a man—one of your own countrymen, Sandy—who knew the father well, and feels the gravest apprehensions lest this son should come to utter wreck.' Then Madame, in the frank fashion which draws men's hearts to her, repeated that conversation with Grant of Thursday Island, which I have recounted in a previous chapter. She kept back nothing. As she spoke of the neglected deposits of osmiridium at fifty pounds an ounce, Ewing shrieked as a man tortured in the most tender nerve centres of his being. As she told of the death of William Toppys, and of the twelve-year-old son's desperate voyage with the father's corpse lashed to the yawl's

deck, her hearers fell silent, and she could see that both men were deeply moved.

'Good lad,' muttered Ching, who hated Willatopy. 'Good lad,' whispered Ewing, who liked him.

As Madame proceeded and painted in her forcible vivid English the twin demons which threatened the half-caste boy, torn from his native island environment, the men followed her words with grave assent. Both of them in their wanderings over the wide world had seen men and women of the brown races wither and die at the touch of white vices.

The story drew to its end.

'He was a circumspectious man, yon Grant,' said Ewing with approval. 'A good Scot and vairy intelligent.'

'He was right, Madame,' agreed Ching. 'It is not the brown skin but the unstable half-blood which is the peril. We must keep away drink and white women from—his young lordship.'

It was a tremendous concession from a man like Ching. The 'Moor,' whom he detested, had become the 'young lordship,' from whose stumbling footsteps must be withdrawn the perilous rocks of offence.

'But can we?' enquired Madame Gilbert anxiously. 'He is a boy and very masterful. We cannot hold him in leading strings. Already my influence over him is waning. The seductions of John Clifford are more potent than the friendly, almost maternal, warnings of Madame Gilbert. I could, if I pleased, by working on his boyish passions, make him crawl at my feet and eat out of my hand. But to what end, and for how long? I should but hasten the process of corruption which the Hedge Lawyer has begun. From me, unassailable, he would fly to others less obdurate. And they are never far away, even in the Straits of Torres. I cannot play with Willatopy. We must do what we can, though it is already borne in upon me that we seek to achieve the impossible. Already, these two days since Willatopy has gone in the yawl with Clifford. It was for that reason that I summoned you, and announced the surprise which Alexander so completely anticipated. I have grave fears lest even now John Clifford has drawn Willatopy away to Thursday Island, thence to take ship for England.'

'For my part,' declared Ewing, 'I doubt the accuracy of Madame Gilbert's prognostications. They do not carry conviction to my astute mind. The change over is too sudden. That



he will ultimately depart for his English lordship I make no manner of doubt. But not yet. He is a good boy. He has a great respect and affection for you, Madame. He worships you, Madame, as a gracious white goddess. As we all do. We are weak men, but there is nothing sinful in our love for you. Ching, here, says little though he thinks a lot; and I say, may be, more even than I think. But, believe me, Madame, we both of us love you from your bonny red hair to your dainty feet—which twinkle so sweetly over the sand when you come from your bath—and we would lay down our lives to preserve you from harm. Willatopy would not have gone away to England without asking for your leave, and bidding you farewell.'

Ching, of the inflexible tongue, murmured assent.

Madame Gilbert, to whom the hearts of men had so often been as toys, was moved. 'My dear friends,' said she gently, 'I believe you, and I thank you. I have never played with your honest hearts, and I am proud that you should have given them so freely to me.' She stretched forth a hand to each man, and first Ewing and then Ching kissed her white fingers.

'And if not to Thursday Island, whither then has Willatopy gone?' asked Madame.

'I do not say that he has not gone to Thursday Island,' replied Ewing. 'Port Kennedy, with its tin houses and bare dusty streets, is the one town in the Straits with any number of white folk. Clifford has played on the boy's white blood and carried him off there to flaunt his lordship before the populace. As a preliminary canter, so to speak. If the brown lord of Topsham meets with favour in the Island I doubt he will aspire to wider fields of conquest.'

'Very like,' agreed Ching, and then flung forth a speech which astonished Madame with its sharp sailor wit. Hitherto she had rated the Skipper as a dull dog. 'Willatopy will not have sailed for England because that would mean leaving his yawl at Thursday Island. Nothing would induce him to risk the safety of his yawl.'

'You are right, Captain,' cried she. 'That is final. The sailor—and Willatopy is a sailor born and bred—will cast off his mistress but never his ship. He will return to us with his yawl. If later on he sails for England, he will leave the yawl here in safety at her moorings. Why didn't you think of that, my circumspicious man Sandy?'

'I am an engineer, not a sailor. It is engines I think of,

not ships. They are nothing to me but the case for the bonny engines.'

'Exactly,' said Madame. 'That is just the difference between an engineer and a sailor—between Glasgow and Devon. You are clever, Sandy, and as a man of business you soar far beyond our poor comprehension. But Captain Ching here is the wiser man.'

It was not very subtle perhaps, but in this fashion Madame Gilbert put down the talkative Ewing and exalted the silent Ching, and bound the hearts of both men to her. More than ever she felt assured that if she needed help—and the fracture of the laws of God and man at her behests—Ching and Ewing would stand immovably with her.

'Madame,' said Ching, and it was to be observed that when he spoke of the sea and his own craft his tongue instantly loosened, 'can you tell me when you propose that the *Humming Top* should cast off and sail for England?'

'I had not considered leaving. There is no hurry, is there?'

'There is no immediate urgency. But it is my duty as Captain to make certain representations to my owner. We sailed in the middle of March and we arrived here after a voyage of two months, most of it in warm water. We have now lain for five weeks in a tropical bay. The yacht is foul, very foul. The brown boys, who dive under her for bits of silver thrown from the rail, say that she trails weed four feet long. The teak sheathing which runs from bilge to bilge, and stretches from near the forefoot to the stern post, is uncoppered. It was attached rather hastily, and copper was still scarce after the war. The wood is proof against worm, but it collects weed. When we do sail—it is now near the end of June—we must make for Singapore and go into dock for a clean. The Chief will tell you that though we do not lack for fuel, the foul bottom will grievously increase our consumption.'

'That is so,' explained Ewing. 'I have dived down myself and seen the blooming garden which flourishes under our bottom. We are a tropical curiosity. We attract every kind of growth except coral. If we linger much longer we shall become firmly attached to the sea floor. We lie in six fathoms but the weeds grow like bananas. At the consumption which brought us here steaming eleven knots, we should not now make eight. And if we get much more foul we shall not make six. Sir John's dollars will burrrn in grand volumes when we put out to sea. It goes against my conscience, Madame, to waste good oil on a foul ship.'

Madame knitted her brows. 'Both of you know now how I am placed. I am a woman and curious; I want to see the drama of Willatopy unfold itself before me.'

'So do we,' said Ching. 'We do not ask you to depart until the need grows urgent. But remember—we must dock at Singapore, and thence home to England will occupy the best part of two months. The *Humming Top* is long and narrow with a very low freeboard. The bulwarks of her monkey fo'c'sle are not more than twelve feet above the water, and her stern is no more than seven. She can live anywhere, but she was built for speed and fair weather cruising; if we ram her through the autumn gales in the Northern Hemisphere she will be a very wet and uncomfortable ship. The seas will be all over bridge and chart-house and smoke-room, and you will have to live battened down. You won't like that, Madame, and your maid Marie will yield up her immortal soul.'

'I am not worrying about Marie's soul—or her stomach,' said Madame callously. 'How long can you give me?'

'Four weeks,' said Ching firmly. 'If we sail towards the end of July we should be in English waters by the middle of October at latest.'

'Make it so,' said Madame. 'I promise that you shall hoist Blue Peter—is that right?—before the end of July. And perhaps sooner. For at the rate at which events are moving, Willatopy may soon determine to transport his person and fortunes to England. At the latest, if all my persuasions that he should remain here fail—and I am afraid that they must fail—I shall offer him passage in the *Humming Top*. It is fitting that the lord of Topsham should enter upon his inheritance on board a Toppys ship. Sir John Toppys will not be best pleased, but if Willatopy insists, the haughty Family must swallow their medicine and pretend that they like it. *Noblesse oblige*. So long as the *Humming Top* is available, Lord Topsham must not travel in a hired steamer. Besides,' added Madame with a smile, 'I shall be able to keep my eye and perhaps my hand upon that detestable little cad, the indispensable managing clerk. And if the sea should be very rough, perhaps a kindly Neptune might whisk him overboard.'

'If you give the word, Madame, he shall go overboard all right,' said Ching, the descendant of Plymouth buccaneers.

'No. I will not allow crime where I command. I am not squeamish. In my time I have shot more men than one or two,

and when I shoot to kill a soul is sped. But what I have done by way of duty, or in self-defence, has not been crime. Unless he provoked me beyond endurance, I would not slay even John Clifford.'

'If I could do a wee bit murder on the swine under the rose, and stuff his corpse into a firebox, it would not disturb my slumbers,' observed Ching. 'But men talk, men talk. If the two of them sail with us in the *Humming Top*, and the weather comes on sweet and dirty, we must put up powerful petitions to an all-wise Providence. From the look of the beast I should judge that he has a taste for whisky. Now whisky, discreetly administered, might help the Divine wisdom to interpose with an effective boost, when Clifford reeled against a lee rail. We are all in the hands of God,' concluded Alexander piously.

'We are a sweet crowd,' observed Madame, with an air of detachment. 'We borrow the yacht of a highly respectable baronet and profiteer. On the voyage out we convert her into a rollicking dope smuggler. We now contemplate petitions to the Almighty that he should boost a drunken Hedge Lawyer over our rail while on the voyage home. And withal we are God-fearing members of some Christian Church. I, it must be confessed, am an indifferent Catholic. Ewing is a Scotch Presbyterian'— 'An elder when at home in Paisley,' interjected the Chief— 'And Captain Ching is what—a Plymouth Brother?'

'Never,' declared Ching in horror. 'The Church of England for me. I will have no truck with sectarians.'

'It is a beautiful example of the essential unity of the Churches,' went on Madame wickedly. 'The Roman Catholic, the Presbyterian Elder, and the zealous English Churchman are all agreed to advise their God to interpose for the confounding of a Hedge Lawyer. And if nothing happens, their belief in the efficacy of prayer will get a nasty jar. Our unanimity is at least some indication that in human judgment the little sweep were better dead. But, my friends, reflect that worms as noxious came through the war unscathed, while the best of Europe's manhood perished. Let us not bank on the discriminating taste of the Almighty, or on the alertness of the Providential ear.'

Alexander Ewing was not unwilling to plunge into an active theological controversy, and Ching, with a lightening of the eye, showed that he too smelled battle. But Madame waved her hand and forbade reply. If she were a Catholic, I am afraid, as she herself admitted, that she was not a very good one.

On the following evening, Ching and Ewing returned to the yacht and three more days went by without word of the yawl, Willatopy, or John Clifford. Then news came like the blare of a bugle summoning Madame to the fight.

She had just returned from her morning swim, and the bathing dress, which rapidly dried in the sun, was still upon her body. The motor boat had just buzzed in through the passage of the bar and brought an officer with a message.

'The Captain's compliments,' said he, 'and I was to tell you, Madame, that the brown boy, Willatopy, with the man called Clifford are sitting in the smoke-room of the yacht drinking Sir John Toppys' port.'

'Port!' cried she. 'At this hour of the day!' Her eyes flashed and she leapt for the tent. Upon her feet she slipped a pair of sand shoes, and about her person buckled the linen trench coat. Then going to her dressing case, she picked out the Webley automatic which, in her tent or in her cabin, was never very far away from her hand. She dropped the pistol into her right-hand pocket.

'Come,' said she to the officer. 'I am ready. Willatopy is Lord of the Island, but Madame Gilbert is Lady of the Yacht. I am going to give Mr. John Clifford, solicitor of St. Mary Axe, a lesson in the laws of property.'

'Shall I stand by with a monkey wrench?' asked the officer eagerly. He was a young engineer.

'It will not be needed,' said Madame serenely.

The tide was at half-ebb, and the trip out to the *Humming Top* much wetter than Madame had expected. The long Pacific rollers were already crashing upon the bar, and had the motor boat delayed its return by half an hour even, the deep passage inshore would have become too boisterous for safety. But Madame, anxious lest she should be cut off for more than six hours from the port-drinking intruders in the *Humming Top's* smoke-room, gave orders that the surf must be faced at all hazards. So the powerful little craft, driven by the full power of its eight-cylindere engine, gave back buffet for buffet, and got through, though the passenger and crew were soaked to the skin in the effort. Madame, in her bathing dress and linen trench coat, had been saturated so often since her first passage of the breakers with Willatopy, that she paid no heed to the salt water. She had always loved the sea, and was becoming well salted.

Ching and an apologetic steward met her at the top of the accommodation ladder. 'With your permission, Captain,' said she, 'I will now take charge.' And, turning to the steward, flung out the one word, 'Explain.'

'Mr. Willatopy and his friend,' said the man, 'arrived alongside in the yawl and came aboard. Mr. Willatopy said that the surf was too bad for the yawl to go in, and that they would wait until high tide in the yacht. I knew that you, Madame, would wish me to treat the young gentleman with respect, so I asked him and his friend to enter the smoke-room. A few minutes later the bell rang, and Mr. Willatopy said that his friend wished for a drink. Would I get a bottle of port? I had no orders, and I was aware that Mr. Willatopy is said to be the new Lord Topsham, so I brought the wine in a decanter. Then I reported what I had done to the Captain. He was very angry, and at once sent off the motor boat to fetch you. He knew that you would risk the surf, and was angry that you should have been called upon to do it. I ought to have reported to the Captain before I carried out the young gentleman's order.'

'On the whole, Captain,' said Madame, thoughtfully, 'I am not sorry that this incident has happened. We now know the line of Clifford's attack and can take measures to meet it. I will counter-attack at once.'

She mounted the steps of the boat deck and walked up to the smoke-room. She stood at the open door looking down upon the trespassers who had already made free with nearly a whole bottle of Sir John's carefully selected wine. Willie had his back to her so that the Hedge Lawyer saw her first. His mean, thin face went white and he tried to push back his chair, forgetting that it was screwed to the deck. Willie turned, and seeing Madame, raised his glass. 'Have a drink, Madame?' cried he. 'I hate whisky, but I like port, which John taught me to drink in Thursday Island. I like tumblers better than these silly glasses, and the sweet sticky stuff we got in Thursday Island has more taste than my cousin's soft thin wine. Here's to your health, Madame.' He emptied the glass, and pointed to the decanter which was nearly exhausted. 'Ring the bell, John; Madame wants a drink.'

But John Clifford, with those sombre deadly eyes of Madame Gilbert upon him, shivered.

'Willie dear,' said Madame, softly, 'will you please listen to me for a moment?' When Madame speaks like that there lives



not a man so insensible as to disregard her. Willatopy passed a hand in rather a bewildered way across his eyes, and turned his chair round towards her. Then, in a stiff, automatic fashion he rose to his feet, and murmured 'I beg your pardon, Madame Gilbert.'

She entered the room and sat down on the sofa. 'Be seated, Willie, I want to talk with you. No,' she added sternly to John Clifford, who was sliding out by the farther door, 'stay where you are, lawyer. Sit!' She snapped out the word as one gives an order to a dog, and Clifford sat.

'Willie,' said Madame Gilbert, in that soft compelling voice of hers, which none can resist, 'on the Island yonder, in a tent I live with my servants: The land is yours. Any day, at any moment, you could tell me to go, and I should go. But while I live in that tent, pitched upon your land, I am your guest and under your protection. Would you, Willie, enter that tent in my absence and give orders to my servants? Would you seat yourself, uninvited, at my table?'

Willatopy passed a hand again over his flushed cheeks and heavy eyes. 'You are my guest on the Island, Madame, my honoured guest. I would not approach your tent without your permission. You know that, Madame.'

'I know it, Willie. But think a little. This yacht is mine, lent to me by your cousin, Sir John Toppys. All the men on board are my servants. The yacht is as much my home as the tent ashore. An English gentleman, Willie, does not go into the house of his friend, and order wine to be placed before him; he waits to be invited, Willie. Still less does he bring another, a stranger, with him. You cannot be an English lord, Willie, unless you begin by becoming an English gentleman.'

Willatopy looked intently at Madame all the while she was speaking, and his eyes lost their blurred look. As the fumes of the unaccustomed port cleared away, the native sense of courtesy in his brown and white blood revived. He sprang from his chair, dropped on the floor at her feet, and laid his black frizzy head upon her knees.

'Forgive me, Madame,' cried he 'I was—a perfect hog.'

'Willie dear,' said Madame, as she passed her hands gently over the long frizzled hair and arranged the tresses neatly on her lap, 'now that you are an English lord you will really have to get your hair cut.' In this fashion the two became reconciled.

Willatopy shed a vinous tear or two on Madame's trench coat,

and then sprang violently up as a thought struck him. 'You, John,' roared he. 'You white slave! Why did you not tell me that it was a hoggish thing to come on board Madame's yacht and order Madame's wine? I did not think. You are my white slave and it is your job to think for me. Madame, have I your permission to kill John here in your yacht? I should like to begin at once.'

'I will deal with him,' said Madame. 'Willie, have you half-a-crown?'

Willatopy, looking puzzled, thrust his hand into a trouser pocket and produced a silver coin. 'It is a two-shilling piece,' said he. 'Will that do?'

'Quite well.' Madame drew the automatic pistol from her side pocket. John Clifford cowered before her screaming. 'Worm and liar,' snapped Madame. 'I am convinced that you are a lawyer—so scurvy a wretch could be none other—but I will never believe that even for three months you were ever an English officer. Come outside and look upon your death.' She drove him out on to the deck at her pistol muzzle. He crouched down by the rail and covered his eyes with both hands.

'No,' said Madame. 'That will not do at all. I had not intended to slay you—just yet—but I am going to make you watch me shoot—as a warning. Take away those hands and look at me.' Her voice snapped at him as it had done before, and Clifford obeyed—as a dog obeys its mistress. He sat by the rail and looked at her.

'Willie,' said Madame, 'stand over there with your back to the sea. I don't want anyone to be hurt, even the brave lawyer. When I give the word throw the coin into the air. I am going to show Mr. John Clifford a little bit of trick shooting which he may bear in his remembrance—as a warning. I shall not hit you, Willie.'

'I am not afraid,' said the boy with a touch of pride. He did as he was commanded. With his back to the sea, and at the word from Madame, he spun the florin into the air.

She had stretched out her pistol arm, and with the muzzle followed the scrap of white metal which flew upwards sparkling in the sun. Madame declares that she never looks at her gun sights—that she shoots by instinct. Exactly at the instant when the coin stopped in act to fall, Madame's pistol cracked, and the two-shilling piece hit fairly by the small .25 bullet flashed over the rail into the sea.

'Teach me to do that,' cried Willie.

Madame returned the pistol to her pocket, and contemplated Clifford. 'I am a woman,' said she 'and very nervous. My terrors, when a stranger approaches my camp, even by day, are lamentable. I struggle against them, but it is no use. My one consolation is this pistol, which never leaves my side, and my skill in its use. My nerves are so uncontrollable that I am sure no stranger—not even one so innocent of offence as Mr. John Clifford—is safe within pistol shot of me. As a friend, who would be desolated should an accident befall him, I say to Mr. Clifford: "Keep clear of Madame Gilbert." Captain,' went on Madame, turning to Ching, who had not been far away during this scene, 'Mr. John Clifford regrets that he must leave us. Would you please order out a boat and put him ashore over there by the mangroves. He will have a pleasant walk through the woods of a couple of miles before reaching a human habitation. Contemplation is good for the penitent soul. And should he approach the ladder of the yacht again—I doubt myself if he can be persuaded to pay us another call—will you please give orders that Madame Gilbert is not at home—neither is her port.'

The dinghy was swung out and Clifford invited to enter. He turned to Willatopy, 'Are you coming too, my lord?' asked he, obsequiously.

'No,' said Willie, 'I hate walking. And your society does not amuse me. The brown girls on Thursday Island, who would not touch you when you sought their favours, were right. You are an unclean beast. Go and walk and sweat by yourself. I am tired and would sleep, if Madame will permit.'

He stretched himself upon the sofa bunk in the smoke-room and instantly fell asleep. Madame sat watching the dark quiet face, so very negroid now that the bright blue eyes were veiled, and presently Ching joined her.

'Captain,' said she softly, 'the white blood stirs and with it the taste for white vice. Look at those lines under the eyes which stand out purple against his skin. Listen to that harsh note in his breath, and watch the uneasy twitch of the long thin fingers. It was not in that restless fashion that he slept when Willatopy was our pilot and our guest. His Heirship lies heavy upon him already, and its burden has scarcely begun. Do you still hate Willatopy, Captain Ching?'

'No, Madame. Since you told us of the black boy's devotion

to his white father I have hated him no more. I wish to help his young lordship if I can.'

'He will need all our help,' said Madame, sighing. 'The evil that Grant prophesied is coming upon him. If it is port to-day, it will be brandy to-morrow. He hates whisky now, but for how long will his palate reject it? Clifford will steep him in foul liquors if he can. For the moment Willatopy is unspoiled. When I spoke in tones of reproof he fell at my feet, and kissed my coat. He implored my forgiveness. But for how long can I fight against the wiles of Clifford?'

'What strikes me the most forcibly may seem to you a little thing,' said the Skipper. 'Willatopy arrived here in his yawl at an hour when he could not pass the bar for the fury of the swell. He came aboard us and said that he had forgotten the state of the tide. Think of that for a sailor and pilot like him. When he was conning the *Humming Top*, Madame, he knew the tide level to an inch, but now he forgets that at certain states his own yawl cannot sail over his own bar. I think that the pair of them must have been lying up and drinking most of the night, Madame.'

'Captain, you are very wise. What you say frightens me.'

Willatopy stirred upon the sofa and groaned. 'John,' he murmured, 'you said the wine was not strong and did no harm. But my head burns and I cannot see. My father said——'

His voice trailed away, and he slid into half-drunken unconsciousness.

'That Hedge Lawyer is a cunning devil,' said Madame. 'It looks as if he represented port as a temperance drink, favoured by the strictest missionaries. I wondered a little why port was chosen for the first introduction to alcohol. Captain Ching, it sticks in my mind that my patience and courtesy towards that stranger will fail me, and that he will get hurt. When I saw him sitting opposite Willatopy in this room, making free with my yacht and my wine, my hand went to my gun. He saw death in my eyes and wilted.'

'It is a job for us, not for you,' said Ching deliberately. 'Shall we take him out into the Straits—and lose him? Not a man aboard of us would give away the secret. My conscience would not worry me. I would as soon drown that devil as a rat.'

'We may come to it. One's views upon the sanctity of human life change with the circumstances. I do not hold it a crime to slay Clifford if the killing of him would save Willatopy. But it

would be a postponement, that is all. Other poachers would find him out and we should not then be at hand to interpose for his protection. There is an alternative which appeals to me more strongly. Clifford is away toiling through the woods yonder. Willatopy is here with us. Suppose, while he sleeps, that we send in for my camp gear, ship it on board, cast off our moorings, and sail immediately for England. Willie would then have been cut loose from the unscrupulous poachers of St. Mary Axe. I would hand him over to the trustees of the Toppys estates, who must give his claims full recognition, and keep a constant watch upon him in England. Disaster, degeneracy, will fall upon him, I fear. They are the present perils of his half-blood. But at least he would have been preserved from deliberate corruption. Will you please summon Alexander. He is shrewd and vairy circumspectious. Let us have his opeenion.'

Alexander considered the proposal with a grave judicial countenance. He had been below tinkering with his adored engines—painting the lily of the high speed turbine—and had seen nothing of the expulsion of John Clifford. When told how Madame had plugged a two-shilling piece with a .25 pistol bullet he expanded with admiration. 'Yon Clifford will go in fear of his dirty life,' said he with satisfaction. 'He will scuttle for the woods when the shadow of our sweet Madame falls across his track. You are a bonnie shooter, but don't puncture the vermin if you can keep your wee gun off him. I like fine your new plan. There is a flavour of lawless kidnapping about it which appeals. Both Ching and me are with you up to the neck. Will you send ashore now for the gear?'

'You can't,' interposed Ching shortly. 'Tis close on low water, and the bar is not passable.'

'Oh!' groaned Madame. 'Like Willie I had forgotten the tide.'

'It's a peety, a sore peety,' observed Ewing. 'But not an insuperable obstacle. The tents and the gear are worth much money; still they belong to Sir John Toppys and not to us. He would be the loser by their being left behind, not us. The idle rich can afford losses of gear. We can maroon the tents as we propose to maroon the law agent.'

'But,' objected Ching—to the best of plans there is always some intrusive objection—'What about my six men in the escort tent, and Madame's maid Marie? We can't leave them behind.'

'I will willingly leave Marie—she can console John Clifford if she has the stomach for him. But I agree that we can't leave Ching's men. They are wanted to work the yacht. Besides, after my stores were exhausted, they would have nothing to live on except bananas and the produce of Mrs. Toppys' fowls and garden. It would be a low down trick to play on the poor dears. We must confide Willie and his future to the hands of fate. If he stays asleep until the tide rises, and we can evacuate my camp, we will accept the omen, up anchor, and sail to-night for home. Willie himself shall be our pilot. But if not, I am a fatalist, and shall not grumble either way. Will you please get the boats ready, Captain, so that no time may be lost. We must do our bit to help the workings of fate, but I shan't interfere to the extent of locking Willie up and kidnapping him by force.'

But fate had already decided. Willatopy awoke about one o'clock, announced that hunger devastated him, and for the first time lunched with Madame and her companions in the saloon. As Willatopy he had messed with the junior officers; as the twenty-eighth Baron of Topsham, he sat at Madame's right hand in the saloon. There was no pretence now that he was a byblow of Will. Toppys.

It was interesting to observe Willie at table. He had been brought up strictly as a native of the Straits, and in his father's hut had lived exactly like other brown boys. Now and then, during his visits to Thursday Island, he had sat at table in rough company. Once or twice, I believe, the banker Grant had invited him to tea with his wife and family. In the usages of white society, with these small exceptions, Willie was wholly unversed. Yet no one watching him now, seated beside Madame and talking freely with Ching and Ewing, would have suspected the slenderness of his social equipment. He never touched knife or fork or plate until by observation he had seen how others used them. He watched his companions as narrowly as he watched the reefs by which and over which he sailed his yawl. His method was slow, but it was very sure. In the course of time, he satisfied his hunger, and all through the meal he never committed one noticeable *gaucherie*.

'The boy is white and a gentleman,' thought Madame. 'What a pity it is that his skin did not come as pale as that of his sisters. But for that unfortunate coffee-coloured epidermis there might be a chance for him after all. The brown skin, together



with the explosive mixture in his blood, are too overwhelming a handicap to carry.' No wine was served by Madame's strict orders.

Afterwards in the smoking-room over coffee and cigarettes,—Willie had never smoked before, but seemed to relish one of Madame's favourite Russians,—Madame openly spoke to Willie of their intentions had he not awakened so inopportunistly.

'It is not too late, Willie, to go now with us of your own free will. Lord Topsham—for you really and truly are Lord Topsham, a great English lord—cannot for long remain on a little island in the Torres Straits. He will be sought out by his own trustees, and by loathsome sharks of the Clifford breed. Now that you know the truth, and your white blood stirs in your veins, I have become convinced that you must go to England. Before you had gone on that trip to Thursday Island, I thought it possible that you might stay in peace here. Now I am sure that sooner or later you must go. And if fate wills, sail with us, your friends who love you, in a Toppys ship. We will take you home with us, and put you in your lawful place.'

But Willie said No. The wine dying out of his system had left him full of terrors. The gallant lad who had fought for three days to save his god-like father from the devils of the sea, who until now had never felt fear, trembled before the unknown. 'I will never leave Tops Island,' muttered he. 'This is my home. I am a Hula and my father said "Always be Hula, Willie, never go to England." I cannot disobey the words of the great white chief my father. Clifford I hate. I am sorry, Madame, that I did not kill him when first he landed on my island. It was you who saved his miserable life from me. In Thursday Island he tried to give me whisky and, when I refused it, told me the sweet sticky port was good and safe to drink. I liked it, Madame. He brought two or three cases away in the yawl, and some other stuff like port—he called it cherry brandy. That I liked too. It is hot and sweet. And then there is . . .' In his artless fashion he was about to speak of the girl Marie, but the white blood stirred, for the first time in his relations with women he felt shame, and the sentence was left unfinished.

'It is as you will,' said Madame gently. 'We will remain here for a little while longer. Should you change your mind and wish to go, here is the *Humming Top* at your service. We cannot sail without our pilot. We should be cast away on the reefs for sure.

You brought us to your island, Willie, and only you can take us away.'

'I will be your pilot to Thursday Island whenever you wish, Madame. But no farther; I will return here in my yawl.'

'And what about Clifford?'

'If he has not gone I will cut off his head. It amuses me that he should be my white slave, but I grow weary of him. His head will smoke nicely over the fire in my cookhouse.'

The afternoon drew on and the tide rose to its height. Willie looking over the bar, decided that the moment for his departure had arrived. He went to the stern of the yacht where the yawl had been tied up.

'One moment,' said Madame. 'Those cases which Clifford brought? The port and the cherry brandy? Shall we throw them overboard, Willie?'

The boy's face worked uneasily. He had tasted of the fruit of the Californian grape and found it very good. He had decided not to go to England to claim his lordship, but had not decided to cut himself loose from all white seductions. It was his intention to carry the cases to his island, and there to offer alcoholic hospitality to the white Marie. Madame knew nothing of what passed through his opening mind. 'Shall we throw the cases into the sea?' she enquired anxiously. 'It will be better so, Willie, my dear.'

Willie did not refuse her in words. He stood hesitating, and then suddenly leaped over the rail. Down he dropped true upon the yawl's deck, and steadied himself with one hand on the main mast. In a moment he had cast off and run up the sails.

Madame Gilbert watched the yawl fly through the slack water toward the bar and heave and pitch in the swell. Willie took her over as a skilful rider lifts a horse over a gate, and slid away into the distant recesses of the bay.

She turned to Ching, who stood silent at her side. 'There is something hidden,' said she. 'Something that we do not know. One does not all at once become so fond of drink. What is that something, Captain Ching?'

Ching shook his head. He did not know. If Alexander had been present I do not think that he would have shaken his head. He might not have known more than was vouchsafed to Ching, but he would at least have put up a guess. Alexander, the circumspectious man, did not lightly confess to being baffled.

Willie moored the yawl at the end of the bay and went ashore in the collapsible boat. On the edge of the beach he met Marie, who in the absence of the terrible Madame Gilbert had gained courage.

'My lord has been a long time gone,' whispered she, regarding him sideways with the eyes that bit. 'Marie has missed you ever so much.'

'You will not miss me any more,' said Willie. He kissed her—it was the salute of the seigneur to the beautiful white slave—and with his arm about her waist walked slowly towards the woods.

NOTE.—'Madame Gilbert's Cannibal,' a shortened version of which has appeared in these pages, will be published immediately in its full form.

Ed. Cornhill.

## THE OLD GARDEN.

THE old garden was bathed in the sunlight of a summer afternoon. The drowsy hum of nature at work and play merely emphasised the enchanted silence. It was a garden of sleep, everything was so still. Not a leaf or grass stirred; the trees, with more than the promise of fruit on the branches, seemed lost in slumber; and to complete the gracious aspect of tranquillity, an elderly lady with silvern hair was dreaming on a garden-seat.

A book was on her lap, her hands were folded; a sunbeam glancing through gaps in the foliage rested on her forehead, enough to illumine a face that, with all the lines and touches wrought by time, was still young with the beauty of kindness.

A gentle disturbance entered Paradise. Mrs. Anstruther, awakened by it, opened her eyes and stared at the peaceful greenness before her, and in thought continued her dream. . . . She was aware of an intruder in Eden, and at the thought of an outsider's desecration of this sanctuary felt herself harden. The habit of proprietorship, and a natural shyness, caused her to resent this wanton spoiling of the peace of the place. She remained quiescent, watchful; and saw a khaki figure, slender, tall and straight, wandering among the trees. Something in that form she recognised as familiar, and at the thought knew her heart leaping in a manner unusual to the elderly.

Unaware of her presence the visitor approached, and she was able to note the thin face, the grizzled moustache and close hair, the grey eyes, the rainbow of ribbons on his coat. She read his rank on the sleeve.

'Colonel Robert Pardon!' she said, in a voice that with all its gentleness carried easily in the drowsy silence.

The officer started unmistakably at her challenge; then saw her and smiled. A life of discipline and duty had left traces on his face; but the smile was as young as it had been—how many years ago!

'You here of all people, Margaret!' he said.

'Margaret Anstruther, Robert,' she gently reminded him.

'Egad! so it is. And I've always thought of you as Maggie Deane.'

'It brings back old memories,' she mused aloud. 'And in

this garden too—which is full of gracious spirits and memories. I'm a grandmother, Robert !'

He laughed at her inconsequence, and sat on the space to spare at the end of the garden-seat.

'So you're a grandmother, Meg ! And it seems only yesterday you were a bright-headed girl, full of confounded mischief, climbing trees, and rebelling against having to learn a Collect every Sunday. Well, I rebelled too, but then I never could learn it.'

'Once you did, though, Robert. Under threat of not coming into this garden for a month. "Keep" Sunday it was, if I remember rightly.'

'Dear me, yes ! I had forgotten that !' He looked at her with eyes of contemplation, and thereupon smiled again. Memory jostled against the realisation. He saw wide inevitable differences between the girl of forty summers ago, racing and tearing with an undisciplined energy, and this lady of silver hair and settled quietude. With his years of experience he preferred the accomplishment to the promise, divine as that girlish promise had seemed to him in the golden calf-days. He found his thoughts drifting vaguely, wistfully, backward, through the avenue of years.

'I see you did your share in the war,' she said.

'Yes, a bit of my bit.'

'I remember the day you went away. Old Murphy brought the telegram into the garden—this garden. I can see his bald head shining in the sun, and his little short stumpy steps.'

'Old Murphy ! He wasn't unlike a starling when he walked. He's asleep, I suppose ?'

'Long ago ! He went out very suddenly, after a stroke.'

For moments they brooded with thoughts of an autumn tinge and a sombre texture.

'He was a good old fellow,' commented Robert, 'peppery, and in his small plump way, most important. He must have been kind to me ; but I know I often thought him a beast. He taught me to make paper-boats, and for years I kept a glass-marble he picked up and brought home to me. Good old Murphy ! I lost it somewhere in West Africa. I suppose it's a fetish now, the hoarded treasure of a witch-doctor. I remember kicking Murphy on the shins once, in a paddy . . . I wish I hadn't now.'

She smiled quietly, and looked sideways at him, liking his bronze and grey.

'Old age is full of those regrets,' she said. 'That's the worst of it! I often find myself writhing over the small vanities and cruelties and meannesses of long ago.'

'My dear Margaret!' he protested. 'You need not talk of old age yet. We are still in the prime, my dear.'

'You may be, Robert, and are; but I'm a grandmother.'

'Fiddle!' There was just a touch of Anglo-Indian testiness in the expression of the word. 'I'm older than you, anyhow. Remember that!'

'Years have nothing to do with it. Every woman is older than a man of the same age, from the very beginning.'

'Some women certainly are,' he conceded; 'and some women certainly are not.' She did not follow into this region of humane philosophy. The immediate personal was of more concern to her.

'The telegram brought news of your uncle's death.'

'I remember. How strange it is, after years of forgetfulness, getting glimpses of that old life which was so different from this. It is over forty years ago. Uncle Clem died the year the *Princess Alice* went down. I remember because, when I went to Woolwich that same year—another result of the telegram—one thought of and saw nothing else but the horrors of that crowded vessel sinking in the Thames.'

'Dear me! yes.'

'The ship that collided with her was the *Bywater Castle*, or was it the *Bywell*? I remember that detail too, and I can't say I've thought of it since. The memory is very strange, and this old garden—As one talks, the things come back. Why are you laughing, Meg?'

She was not laughing, had not been laughing, but as she had listened and watched his face, a thought flashed through her mind, and touching to life the spirits of her humour, brought gleams of mirth to her lips and eyes.

'Nothing, Robert. It was only an idea that occurred—it amused me; but it wouldn't interest you.'

'Nothing' though it was, her aspect had quickened in him the urge to laughter, a result of this hour of renewed deep sympathy, which was, indeed, proving strangely pleasant to both of them.

'But I think it *would* interest me,' he protested. 'Anyhow, I'll give a penny for the thought.'

She shook her head with an alluring obstinacy, which showed that the spirits were still alert.



'It's not for sale, Robert—not even for twopence.'

'Oh, I mustn't waste twopence in these days,' he said. 'Besides you're sure to tell me presently for nothing.'

She laughed quietly, and again her mirth intrigued him.

'What a curmudgeon!' she said. 'And once you wasted—I remember—many twopences on brandy-balls and bulls'-eyes, horrid things.'

'O for the digestion of yester-year!' he sighed. 'Youth has all the luck!'

She roused herself, closed the book on her lap, and placed it on the seat beside her.

'That sort of remark, Robert, is the beginning of old age; and you don't look it! There is plenty of youth for us yet, if we keep our hearts joyous. White hair counts for nothing, nowadays.'

'Do you remember my "bone-shaker?"' he asked abruptly.

'Oh yes! I do, now you remind me. It rattled so that you announced yourself before you were in sight.'

'It would do this generation good,' he declared, with a renewal of energy, 'to see one of those old wooden rattly things on which we laboured. That was work, it was exercise, adventure. They'd be ashamed then of taking their ease in cars and motor-bikes and scooters.'

'Shame—not they! The lucky children have none of that modesty. They'd fall out of their cars from laughter at the backwardness of their forebears. . . . Youth can be very cruel.'

'And very fine,' he added thoughtfully. An expression of dream came into his eyes. 'I—I had no good word for the "nut" before the war. His hair and his attitudes. I called, and thought, him girlish. But when I saw him—in hundreds—going over the top, always after carefully shaving—charging through the spatter of machine-gun fire—I—well, he proved built of the stuff of heroes.'

Her eyes were dim because of his words, but when he turned his head to look at her she smiled—an April face, which recalled further memories. He laughed, so that some of the grasses in the garden awoke to listen.

'We buried in this orchard an old bottle,' he said.

'So you remember that! I've never forgotten.'

'It was your girlish look just now which reminded me. You looked just so—tears, blue eyes, and smiles—on the day I broke

your doll and to make up for it stuck her head on backwards. Remember ?'

'I do. Poor Annette! she's long since gone to—sawdust.'

'And you looked like that when that vile butcher-boy trampled on the face George Rowley—that was the footman's name, wasn't it?—had moulded for us in the sand. He was a beast, that butcher-boy!'

'No. I don't remember that!'

'Nor him?'

'No.'

'Sorry, Meg! I remember him thoroughly well. The black-guard! He had greasy ear-locks, long cork-screws—black—ugh! I suppose he's fat and getting on for sixty now, quite possibly an over-plump profiteer. Oh, the beast!'

'Robert, what a power of hate you've got.'

'Yes, Meg. I've always hated him. He was my *bête noire*. He often pummelled me, was two heads taller than me. I could never get back at him on even terms. And he jeered at me, knowing it.'

'I think I haven't quite forgotten,' she said, after reflection. Her eyes held a new light, coloured with mischief.

'Ah!'

'That boy was my first love. How I adored him! His strength, his ready wit, his shining hair.'

'Come now, Meg!'

She turned her face to look at him with a side-glance of happy amusement.

'I remember he rode on the box of the fly with the driver when Aunt Pooley was taking me to the station for a week's visit to London, when I went to the Waxworks, then in Soho, with the Chamber of Horrors—I can still smell that ugly smell—ugh! But then the Christy Minstrels and "Les Cloches de Corneville" put it all right. . . . But perhaps he was not worthy of my young love,' she added reflectively.

'He was not! I wish we could find that bottle.'

'Yes, the bottle. It was at the foot of the tree.'

'Was that the twopenny thought, Meg?'

'Perhaps it was, Robert.'

'Egad! I'll find it then! Over forty years ago! What an adventure!' He sprang up with a glad energy and looked up, looked down—was baffled.

'Better leave it alone. Let the dead past bury its—bottle.'

'No! By Jove, no! Certainly not!'

'Then try that old tree.'

She pointed to an apple-tree, rusty, gnarled, aged, yet still showing its better-than-promise of ruddy fruit.

He walked briskly to the tree. There could be no doubt of his unfaded youthfulness, in spite of the grey of his hair.

'There is a spade in the hutch, over there.' She indicated what looked like a green thicket.

'I remember! That's where Murphy kept the rabbits.'

The years melted to—the dimensions of a tear-drop, as, striding among the trees, he found the shed, in the last condition of rusting decrepitude, which brought the memories leaping back. Gracious shadows wandered about him. It was a garden rich with genial ghosts.

He took back spade, fork and pitchfork.

'Now exactly where?' He looked to her for guidance.

She rose and went towards him. He noted her grace, and the youthfulness that denied the undoubtable grand-maternity.

'Try here!' She pointed at a dandelion with her foot; and he went to work.

'Carefully!' she charged him.

'Aren't I as careful as I can possibly be?' he answered, with the swift spirit of protest that reminded her vividly of his intolerant boyhood.

Excitement grew on both of them, an excitement elaborately hidden, as with careful hands he delved. . . . They nearly missed the bottle even then. It was smaller than memory promised, and so solidly embedded in the earth that after the sleep of forty years—the wilderness time!—it reappeared solidly enclosed in soil. He threw the spadeful on the growing upturned heap, and the bottle rolled into view.

History was resumed. The dream was ended. Neither said a word, though their hearts were throbbing strangely—for elderly folk.

It was a squat clumsy glass bottle. Robert allowed no sentiment to delay the climax. Walking to a distance of safety, he hurled the bottle on a flint and broke its neck.

'No!' she had cried, protesting against this act iconoclastic. It seemed she would have remained content with the bottle still buried and guarding its hoard; but he had not been a gunner for nothing.

He came to her eagerly with the splintered *torso*; his hands trembled with exactly the same tense excitement as when he had

brought her the robin's nest he had found among the laurels—which still were there!

He rattled the bottle, and released a farthing dated 1872. They had both forgotten that! There followed the solitary joint of a doll's plaster leg; which she did remember. A blob of crumpled paper rammed in proved a mere fragment of newspaper—signifying nothing; and then—then—something else, forgotten by neither. An elaborately folded half-sheet of coloured note-paper, in the fashion of the period.

He opened this with all the delight of attaining a new discovery. She tended to draw backward—the sign and measure of her equal interest.

'We, R. P. and M. D., swear that we will marry each other some day. This is a sworn secret.'

It was signed with a sprawling 'Robert Pardon' and 'Margaret Evelyn Deane.'

'To think I could write as atrociously as that!' said he.

'To think I could set my signature to such nonsense!' she declared; but her face was rosy, and looked wonderfully youthful and pretty under the neat silvery hair.

'Oh, come now, Meg!' said he. 'Why not?'

'Why not?' she echoed, and looked at him aghast.

'I've never forgotten, anyhow,' he declared.

'Oh, fibber!' she retorted.

'Never!' he persisted, with the rapid energy his characteristic. 'And egad, I keep you to your word!'

'But Robert, I'm——'

'For goodness' sake, Meg, don't tell me again that you're a grandmother! It doesn't interest me, my dear. I don't care a—buried farthing what you are—I've never loved anyone else.'

'And I—oh, Robert, there was always a corner of my heart, but—at our age——'

'Fiddlesticks! Our age! We're hardly grown up. Think of the years we didn't live. We—we musn't disappoint the old garden.'

And that evening the spirit haunting the leafy place, in its wonderful peace, knew that never had its grass, flowers, leaves and branches been illumined with a happier light. The robin, perched upon a forgotten spade, beside an upturned heap, twittered for joy. It may have been worms. . . . The garden was, anyhow, undeniably happy.

C. E. LAWRENCE.

## A DOMINIONS' ROLL OF HONOUR.

THE last six years—years of war and its aftermath—have taken away singularly few of the leading political figures in the United Kingdom. On the very eve of the war, in July 1914, Mr. Chamberlain died, and though, owing to the tragic breakdown in his health, he had for long been no more than *magni nominis umbra*, his death made a great gap; but, with the exception of John Redmond, and excluding Lord Kitchener, Minister of State in war-time because he was a great soldier, the men who in August 1914 were best known as past or present statesmen are with us still.<sup>1</sup> In strong contrast is the record for the same years of the three self-governing Dominions of Canada, Australia, and the Union of South Africa. In all of them death took toll of well-known leaders.

Like Mr. Chamberlain, and earlier in 1914, Lord Strathcona died before the war. He died at the age of ninety-three, wonderful alike for the length of his life and for the amount of fruitful work crowded into it, for up to his last illness he was in harness as High Commissioner in London for Canada. He had chosen as a boy a career under the Hudson Bay Company in preference to one in the Indian Civil Service, and began his Canadian life about the time when Lord Durham went out on his memorable mission—in other words, before colonial self-government had come into being, long before self-governing Dominions took form and shape. He had seen all the successive stages in the evolution of Canada, and the transcontinental railway, which made the Dominion of Canada in any true sense a single unit, was in large measure his handiwork. He once summed up to me his experience of life in the words: 'It is a good world; it is what you like to make it.'

He did not live to see the beginning of the war, but another equally long-lived Canadian did. This was Sir Charles Tupper, who was ninety-four when he died in 1915. Lord Strathcona was Canadian by adoption, Scotsman by birth, but Sir Charles Tupper was Canadian born, though he passed the last years of his life and died in England. He was a son of Nova Scotia—a province which has given many prominent statesmen to Canada, among them the man who succeeded Tupper as leader of the Conservative party in the Dominion and who as Prime Minister

<sup>1</sup> Written in June 1920.

guided Canada through the war, Sir Robert Borden, born at Acadian Grand Pré. Tupper was born in 1821, the year of Napoleon's death; for years he was the last survivor of the fathers of Canadian Confederation and was within a few days of his ninetieth birthday when, in June 1911, he was present and spoke at the unveiling of the memorial tablet in the room at the Westminster Palace Hotel, in which Canadian delegates had framed the Act of Union in 1866-7. 'Well done, good and faithful servant,' was the tribute paid to him on that occasion by his political opponent, Sir Wilfrid Laurier. He lived to see his party—the Conservative party—come back into power in Canada a few weeks later, and in November of the same year, now well over ninety, he was present at another gathering in London and spoke, it was said, for thirty-five minutes without notes. Before he died, the soldiers from the Dominion which he had helped to bring to birth had begun their glorious record of fighting in France. His political life had been strenuous and stormy; the life of a hard-fighting party man. He had undaunted courage and was capable of great generosity, as was shown in his relations with another very eminent Nova Scotian, Joseph Howe, to whom he was at one time bitterly opposed. Sir John Willison, in his interesting book of Reminiscences, says of Tupper that 'in constructive genius he has had no equal among the public men of Canada,' and this is the verdict of a critical judge, not enamoured of the political methods employed by Tupper and his party. His public life was interesting from various points of view. For some years, while in England as High Commissioner for Canada, he remained a member of the Dominion Government, thus being in effect a resident Minister in London and in some sort foreshadowing what, in the latest developments of Empire relations, has been suggested for all the self-governing Dominions. Again, while an outspoken Imperialist, he had no little suspicion of any plan for Empire organisation which might possibly limit Canadian autonomy; the same kind of suspicion, though not carried to the same extent, as was entertained so markedly by Sir Wilfrid Laurier. He looked to fiscal measures, not to anything of the nature of an Imperial Parliament, for promoting unity. He had had a hand in creating a nation, and he was not going to countenance any movement which he thought might impair its nationhood. Mr. Chamberlain's tariff policy he considered to be 'the only policy by which the Colonies may be indissolubly bound to the Empire.' He started life as a



doctor, practised for twelve years before he went into politics, and subsequently for some time combined medicine and politics. He was a most successful doctor and ministered to the bodies of his political opponents, if he could not operate upon their minds. The medical profession is not, like the legal, an obvious training ground for political life, but we shall come later on to another doctor who rose to fame outside his professional calling. As a politician—and it stands to his credit—Tupper was more often the power behind the throne than in the throne itself. He was always to the fore in times of party need: few could equal him in boldly facing adverse conditions and critical complications. He was real leader of his party in Nova Scotia longer than he was titular leader or premier of the colony, and, though he became Prime Minister of the Dominion, it was only for about two months in 1896, when the Conservative party was *in extremis*. They were swept from power in the summer of that year, Mr. Laurier, as he then was, became Prime Minister, and held the office without a break for fifteen years, until, in 1911, he in turn was swept away by the tide which rose against the proposed Reciprocity Agreement with the United States.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier outlived the war. He died early in 1919, not, like Sir Charles Tupper, at a phenomenal age, but still an old man of seventy-seven. When he died, he had been in Opposition for between seven and eight years, having remained in Opposition when many leading Liberals in Canada combined with the Conservatives to form a National Government under Sir Robert Borden. He fought Borden hard on the Conscription issue and refused to join forces with him; yet his attitude during the war, taken as a whole, was by no means the least noble feature of his career. For from the first moment he never faltered, but gave his whole heart and voice and influence to the Allied cause. French Canada, of which he was the son and outstanding leader, was not in the main conspicuous for enthusiasm in that cause, and Nationalists of the type of Bourassa were avowedly opposed to Canadian intervention. With Laurier himself it had been almost an obsession that Canada should not be drawn into what he called the vortex of European militarism, and he held the doctrine quite openly that while, when Great Britain was at war, Canada necessarily was also at war, it rested entirely with Canada whether or not to take any active part in the war. When August 1914 came, he held the same doctrine still, that the decision rested with Canada, but he had no

shadow of doubt as to what that decision must be. While he was in office, there was no Dominion statesman who was such a commanding figure as Laurier. Four times he represented Canada at Imperial Conferences; Canada holds the first place among the Dominions, and for long years Canada meant Laurier. Probably we all attempt to define the principles and motives of great men more clearly and sharply than they could or would themselves define them; but there was every indication that in normal times Canada bounded his political horizon. Canada had found herself, and he had found Canada, in the British Empire: there was nothing to be gained, possibly much to be lost, by disturbing an existing fact. But the one thing needful was Canadian autonomy, and any move in the direction of closer partnership was to be suspected and, if possible, shelved. Yet he gave tariff preference to Great Britain; he worked harmoniously with British Governments, especially when they were Liberal Governments, and, when the real testing time came, all aloofness disappeared. 'It is our duty to let Great Britain know, and to let the friends and foes of Great Britain know, that there is in Canada but one mind and one heart and that all Canadians stand behind the Mother Country.' These were his words, when the Canadian Parliament met after the Declaration of War, and in the same great speech he referred to Canada as 'a daughter of Old England.' Sir John Willison writes of him, that he 'belonged to the old Whig group of England or to the old Court circle of France, gracious, restrained, of serene spirit and simple tastes.' There was much of the Whig, the aristocratic Liberal, about him. A keen party politician in a New World democracy, he was none the less a great gentleman, a gentleman in look, in speech, in scholarly tastes. He had the Frenchman's grace of words and manner, and, when he stood up for Canada and spoke for Canada, sight and sound alike told that Canada was more than well represented.

The British North America Act, which federated Canada, was passed in 1867, and we have seen that one of the prime movers in procuring the Act and achieving Canadian Federation lived on for another forty-eight years. The parallel Commonwealth Act was only passed in 1900, but in the six years under review no fewer than four of the fathers of Australian Federation died, three of them having been Prime Ministers of the Commonwealth which they created. The last to die, at the beginning of the present year, was the first Prime Minister of Australia, Sir Edmund Barton. He

was nearly seventy-one when he died, and had left political life to be a Judge of the High Court of Australia as far back as the autumn of 1903. Though he was Prime Minister for the first two and a half years of the Commonwealth, and represented Australia at the Colonial Conference of 1902 and the coronation of King Edward, he was more prominent as a maker of the Commonwealth than as a leader of the Commonwealth when made. After Sir Henry Parkes' death he was in the very front rank in fighting the battle of Federation in New South Wales—and New South Wales held the key of the position. He was Chairman of the National Convention which drafted the Constitution, and went with the Bill to London for the final stage. A skilled lawyer, highly educated and well read, he was also a fine robust popular speaker, and was classed as a tribune of the people. But he had breadth of view and the statesmanlike quality of not lending himself to unnecessary antagonism. He was, in short, a citizen of real ability who, at a particular time and for a particular object, rendered conspicuous and lasting service to his country.

Exactly three months before he died one of his principal colleagues in the Federation movement, and Attorney-General in his Ministry, passed away. This was the Victorian statesman, Alfred Deakin, who succeeded Barton as Prime Minister, and had three separate terms of that office. He was a younger man than Barton, sixty-three when he died, but he had been a private citizen since 1913; his strength was overtaxed, and in the last years of his life his health entirely broke down. He was a most interesting and most lovable man. No one could be with him without feeling his personal attraction. He was a speaker of rare eloquence and, like Laurier, gained the epithet of silver-tongued. He loved books, was full of ideals, possessed of untiring energy, and devoted to public work. At the same time he was as difficult to analyse and define as was the somewhat similar statesman on a greater stage, Mr. Gladstone. He had simplicity of character in high degree; he never would accept any honour, not even the Right Honourable which befitted his office, and yet as a public man he wanted capacity for plain and direct action, as though he did not think quite clearly or saw more sides than more commonplace men see. A more high-minded man never lived, and he might well have lived longer, had he not used up the fire of life too lavishly in consuming zeal for the public good.

In 1918, a few weeks before the end of the war, Sir George Reid

and Lord Forrest died, almost at the same time—the first in England, the second on the voyage to England. Both were over seventy, and Reid was slightly the older man of the two. Reid had been a very notable figure in Australian politics; more stories gathered round him than any other prominent public man in Australia. Prior to Federation, he was for some years Premier of New South Wales, and after Federation in 1904–5 for a short time Prime Minister of the Commonwealth. But beyond question he did his best work for Australia, and gained most distinction for himself, when about five years later he came to London as the first High Commissioner for Australia. He was essentially a Liberal, in the old-time sense of Liberalism, a very strong Free Trader, who had led New South Wales on Free Trade lines. For this reason, among others, he was at first opposed to Federation, but subsequently came round and joined in carrying it. Hence he was spoken of at the time as Yes-No Reid, on which his only comment was that it should have been No-Yes. He was a Scotsman, who had gone out as a child to Australia, and he was a most humorous Scotsman, one of many sons of Scotland, as far as my experience has gone, who have given the lie to the proverbial incapacity of Scotsmen to see a joke. No man could be wittier in repartee, and none enjoyed more thoroughly jokes at his own expense. His squat stout figure, very slow movement and somewhat drawling speech, all added point to his quick wit. He was equally effective when heckled on a public platform or when making an after-dinner speech. His figure played a great part in the stories fathered on or attached to him. To the inquiry of what use he could be to the Army in the war, the reputed answer, probably coined by himself, was that he might be valuable as a base. When addressing a public meeting from a point of vantage and persistently interrupted, at length he singled out the offending individual and silenced him with what was indeed a weighty threat, 'If that gentleman does not keep quiet, I will fall on him.' At another meeting he held forth to the effect 'Some of my kind friends have been wishing I was dead. Now, if I were dead, what would happen?' and from the crowd came the immortal reply, 'The fat *would* be in the fire.' His political views did not really accord with those of either of the two parties in the Commonwealth, and he was probably more at home in the House of Commons, which he entered after his term as High Commissioner expired, than if he had gone back to the Australian Parliament. He was then too old to make a

real mark in the House, but it was something to have been chosen member for St. George's, Hanover Square, and when he died he was succeeded for a short time in the constituency by another Australian, Sir Newton Moore. One evening after dinner, when the speaking turned on getting back to the land, he reminded us that we all get back to the land sooner or later, and when he died a very bright, shrewd, kindly man was laid under the turf.

If Reid was a typical Liberal, in the home sense, Lord Forrest, the first and, up to date, the only Australian peer, was a typical Conservative. Australian born, he was an out-and-out John Bull. Western Australia, his birthplace and home, was much later than the other Australian colonies in taking on self-government, and Forrest was in the Survey Department and eventually Surveyor-General under the old regime. When self-government came in 1890 he was the first Premier of the colony, and held the office for ten consecutive years until Federation, when he became a member of the first Commonwealth Ministry and was in all the Liberal Ministries, except Reid's, as well as in the Coalition War Ministry under Hughes. He was three or four times Treasurer of the Commonwealth, and narrowly missed being Prime Minister. Having served in old days under the Colonial Office, he was consistently friendly to the Home Government and attached to the Old Country, at least as much as if he had been born in it. Hardly any Australian statesman did so much really constructive work. He was about the last of the great Australian explorers. His most notable enterprise, which brought him the gold medal of the Royal Geographical Society, was his journey in 1874 from the coast at Geraldton through the heart of the Australian desert to the transcontinental telegraph line from Adelaide to Port Darwin. He lived to see the railway completed east and west across the desert, and Western Australia thereby linked up to the Eastern States. For Western Australia was the British Columbia of the Commonwealth and, curiously enough, almost exactly the same number of years passed in Australia as in Canada between the original Federation Act and the opening of the line which made Federation a reality. Before Labour attained its full strength, Forrest's position and influence in Western Australia were unchallenged. He was called the King of the West, and there was a story that a native who had planted himself on Crown lands, when asked if he knew whose lands they were, replied at once, 'John Forrest's.' He fully earned his position. In his time and

under his guidance the colony grew wonderfully, and he was responsible for the stupendous work of bringing water for 350 miles to the Kalgoorlie goldfields. With the new forces of Labour he had no sympathy and, blunt and downright, did not lend himself to conciliation. But his name will always stand high in the list of makers of Australia, and in private life he was the kindest and most hospitable of friends.

The South African Roll of Honour, by no means exhaustive, includes three very well-known names, the names of General Botha, Mr. Schreiner, and Sir Starr Jameson. General Botha's title to greatness will not be questioned; he made history and will live in history. He was only fifty-seven when he died. Possibly he was *felix opportunitate mortis*, for he died the first and up to his death the only Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa; he had just completed a most dramatic and fruitful chapter in the story of South Africa and rounded off the Union by the addition of what had been German South-West Africa. But his death was a terrible loss to the Empire, and the measure of the loss is the measure of his greatness. There must have been natural genius in him. In 1899 outside South Africa he was an unknown man. When he died twenty years later his name was well known throughout the world. A South African farmer, he shone alike as soldier and as statesman, yet he had had no military or political training outside the Transvaal and its Volksraad. From the first he seems to have had high character and breadth of view, a chivalrous nature and a widening mind. The difficulties which he faced and surmounted might well have broken the health and spirit of any man. He had to fight a losing fight and counsel a surrender. He had to lead his own former republic on the lines of a British self-governing colony, to join in making the framework of a nation, to lead the nation when made, and to keep it from looking back at a time of strong temptation. Racial feeling in South Africa perhaps derives its strength largely from the fact that in South Africa, if there is to be any division at all, it is the only possible kind of division. The country is essentially one. Different political units were artificially made, they were not the result of nature but of bad human handiwork. Botha himself, with many other Afrianders in like case, was born under the British flag. Moving from Natal into the Transvaal was little more than moving into an adjoining county or parish. He grasped the bedrock fact of unity, but at the same time he made allowance for the human desire to find a ground of



difference. Hence he combined singular forbearance to his recalcitrant countrymen with unswerving determination to hold fast by the Union and the Empire. At Imperial Conferences he was very much in line with Laurier. Either man was the non-British representative of a two-nationality Dominion. Each was chary of any proposal tending to modify the status of the Dominion. But when the question for the Empire was to be or not to be, neither the French Canadian nor the South African Dutchman gave an uncertain sound.

Mr. Schreiner came to London shortly after the war began to be High Commissioner for the Union of South Africa, chosen for the post by General Botha. It was the war that brought him over. He thought, and thought rightly, that as High Commissioner he could best 'do his bit' at that critical time for South Africa and the Empire. For he had no two minds about the Great War as he had about the South African War, when he vainly hoped that he might keep the Cape Colony, of which he was Premier in 1898-1900, aloof from the strife. Like General Smuts, he was a Cambridge man of very high distinction, an able lawyer and, prior to the Raid, Attorney-General in Rhodes' Ministry at the Cape. The Raid brought a parting of the ways. Though he himself was neither Dutch nor British but of German descent, his personal and political connections were rather with the Dutch than with the British section of the community, and in 1898 he headed a Bond Ministry. A man of the highest principles and of great intellectual power, he was a politician with many searchings of heart. This was illustrated by the memorable apologia which he made in the Cape House of Assembly after his retirement from office. Alfred Lyttelton, who was in South Africa at the time, was a listener on this occasion, and when he came out he exclaimed to a mutual friend of his and mine, who was with him, 'Only one other man in the world could have made that speech, my old uncle, Mr. Gladstone.' Men of this type, unless they are supremely great, are less effective in the rough and tumble of democratic politics than those who have narrower vision and fewer scruples. By temperament they would seek peace and ensue it, but their means do not conduce to their end, for they rather discover than ignore points of difference on the way. A great champion of the coloured men, Schreiner opposed rather than promoted the Union of South Africa, because the Constitution did less than justice to the coloured races. But he was in his element as one of the representatives of

the natives in the Union Senate, and as High Commissioner in war-time, watching over the well-being of the fighting men of South Africa, and answering to one call and another of mercy and beneficence, he was of the ablest and best of his kind. When he died at the age of sixty-two, a life, which had been lived on the strictest rules of honour, ended in work which was in full harmony with the principles which had guided the life.

With Sir Starr Jameson, oldest of the three South Africans, we come to the second doctor in the list, and the only bachelor. Like his bosom friend, Cecil Rhodes, he was never married. It would be difficult to find a parallel to his career in any romance. He went out to South Africa as consulting physician to the Kimberley hospital, took service with the British South African Company and administered their territories, led the notorious Raid, was tried and sent to prison. Within eight years he was Premier of the Cape Colony, and at the Imperial Conference of 1907 he sat side by side with General Botha. He was one of the main promoters of the Union of South Africa. Having by his mischievous adventure embittered feeling between the two white races in South Africa, he afterwards used all his influence to bring them together. Bad health led to his retirement from South African politics in 1912; returning to England he became Chairman of the Company which his earlier action had compromised, and he died a baronet and Privy Councillor, loved by all who knew him. No more transparently honest man ever played a leading part in a conspiracy. No one ever did more to repair a great mistake or was more successful in living down a badly damaged record. The Scottish tenacity and human loving-kindness of the man combined to make good, and the world was the poorer when 'Dr. Jim' died. He died as far back as November 1917, but it was not until May 22 last that he was finally laid to rest, where Rhodes lies, in the Matopo hills.

C. P. LUCAS.

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